

EMIGRÉ

No. 14/17.95

1970

Our work could be easily understood if one didn't always want to interpret it symbolically.

POLLY BERTRAM & DANIEL VOLK

UPPERMANSFELD IN SWITZERLAND



## HERITAGE

Last summer I received a phone call from Richard Feurer, a young graphic designer from Zurich, Switzerland. He wanted to stop by our office to share experiences about his involvement with the Macintosh computer. Initially, I was not too excited about the idea of looking at Swiss design, but the idea of a Swiss designer working on a computer intrigued me. I've always felt that the pioneers of Swiss design missed a great opportunity to work with the perfect tool to fit their orderly and functional approach to design. The computer can so easily facilitate

the grids and structured typography that are an integral part of traditional Swiss graphic design. Perhaps this young designer had put the Macintosh to work in an appropriate fashion, and I was curious to see the results.

To my surprise, his work was quite the opposite of what I expected. Most pieces were produced on a color computer and were wildly expressive, a semblance to the work of his Swiss ancestors. Needless to say

frustrated about being so prejudiced, it is difficult for me to sink into the more rigid and calculated works of such pillars as Müller-Brockmann and Armin Hofmann. Their influence on me, though, and I wondered if the heritage that was left by these great designers had hindered the development of young Swiss designers like Richard Feurer. A bad topic for an issue of *Emigre*, I thought.

Richard Feurer, in an attempt at devoting an issue to young Swiss designers, replied, "You will find nothing new in Switzerland. It's the Wave. However," he added, "Switzerland has very nice mountains, and a big airport in both Zurich and Basel." This I took as a challenge. Later, I got on a plane and visited him in Basel. He was still doubtful about the validity of devoting an entire issue to young Swiss designers. The issue would present people with the wrong idea about design in Switzerland today," he said.

My investigation on the state of graphic design in Switzerland today and what it represents is uniquely Swiss or not. Instead, the following pages are filled with the work of young graphic designers, mostly from Zurich, who discussed Swiss design. In the process it became clear that there is no evidence of a single Swiss design. Although the country as a whole might still nurture or inspire a clean, modern design, as many different styles and approaches as you would see in America, or even in the world. However, many of the designers I met, each in his or her own way, consciously or unconsciously assimilated a powerful design tradition that is undeniably Swiss.

Rudy VanderLans

Portrait



Emigre 40

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Including a special  
24-page insert written,  
designed and produced in  
Zurich, Switzerland by:  
Richard Feurer, Peter  
Bäder, Polly Bertram &  
Daniel Volkart, Roland  
Hochbächer, Margit  
Kastl-Lustenberger and  
Daniel Zehntner.

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Our work could be easily understood if one didn't always want to interpret it symbolically.

POLLY BERTRAM & DANIEL VOLKART

ISSUES #26



MINIBAR

## HERITAGE

Last summer I received a phone call from Richard Feurer, a young graphic designer from Zurich, Switzerland. He wanted to stop by our office to share experiences about his involvement

### Foreword

with the Macintosh computer. Initially, I was not too excited about the idea of looking at Swiss design, but the idea of a Swiss designer working on a computer intrigued me. I've always felt that the pioneers of Swiss design missed a great opportunity to work with the perfect tool to fit their orderly and functional approach to design. The computer can so easily facilitate the grids and structured typography that are an integral part of traditional Swiss graphic design. Perhaps this young designer had put the Macintosh to work in an appropriate fashion, and I was curious to see the results.

To my surprise, his work was quite the opposite of what I expected. Most pieces were produced on a color computer and were wildly expressive, bearing little resemblance to the work of his Swiss ancestors. Needless to say

I felt embarrassed about being so prejudiced. It is difficult for me to imagine Swiss design without thinking about the more rigid and calculated works of such designers as Emil Ruder, Josef Müller-Brockmann and Armin Hofmann. Their influence on graphic design has remained strong, and I wondered if the heritage that was left by these apostles of the grid had either helped or hindered the development of young Swiss designers like Richard Feurer. Not a bad topic for an issue of *Emigre*, I thought.

When I first told Wolfgang Weingart about the idea of devoting an issue to young Swiss graphic designers, he was surprised and replied, "You will find nothing new in Switzerland.

They are all imitators of the New Wave. However," he added "Switzerland has very nice mountains, and delicious chocolate, and a big airport in both Zurich and Basel." This I took as a personal invitation, and three months later, I got on a plane and visited him in Basel. He was still very skeptical and had serious doubts about the validity of devoting an entire issue to young Swiss graphic designers. "Such an issue would present people with the wrong idea about design in Switzerland today," he said.

This issue is by no means a thorough investigation on the state of graphic design in Switzerland today and it is debatable whether the work presented is uniquely Swiss or not. Instead, the following pages are filled with candid interviews with various young graphic designers, mostly from Zurich, who discussed Swiss culture, tradition and graphic design. In the process it became clear that there is no evidence of a single dominating movement or trend. Although the country as a whole might still nurture or inspire a clean, orderly design approach, you will see as many different styles and approaches as you would see in America, Holland, Germany or anywhere else in the world. However, many of the designers I met, each in his or her own personal way have consciously or unconsciously assimilated a powerful design tradition that is undeniably Swiss.

Andy Vanderlans

### Emigre #14

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Daniel Zehetner.**



# BY WOLFGANG WEINGART

Where are the young Swiss graphic designers of today? That was my spontaneous question to Rudy VanderLans during his visit to the Basel School of Design in November, 1989. He reacted spontaneously by asking that I write an introduction that addressed this question. There are, as a preclusion to the topic, almost no young progressive Swiss designers today. There exists a strong tradition of Swiss graphic design and there are a few designers from the older generation who still practice this tradition in Switzerland.

Today, graphic design is international. Modern technology, with its fax machines, airplanes, satellites and computers, makes every form of communication available to the contemporary designer by placing it directly on the work table. In a more tangible form, there are also international publications such as *Graphis*, *Domus*, *ID*, *Typographische Monatsblätter*, *Form*, and *Idea*. These international design magazines give designers the opportunity to peruse the latest trends and information. And there is also the opportunity, by following these trends, to stereotype the printed images.


This is why for me, graphic design today appears globally to have come from a master template rather than from original creative sources. Contemporary design is a melting pot, a melange of personalities rather than individual voices. This is true of Swiss design in the eighties and the upcoming nineties. Progressive young designers in our country are almost all oriented towards the "New Wave," which originally came from Basel at the end of the sixties. At that time, it was called the "New Basel Typography" and there was little chance that it would survive in its own more-than-conservative country, Switzerland. The American students studying in Basel during that time had much better luck in exporting the so-called "Swiss Punk" to the States and integrating it into the crazy American lifestyle. Now, fifteen years later, these design concepts are slowly returning to Switzerland via some young Swiss designers and being accepted in the country where they originated. Many of today's graphic designers, here and overseas, understand only how to imitate the current fashion of "New Wave," but do not understand the function of typography. Typography for them is cliché rather than a form of communication.

Where is the Basel School of Design today? In my eyes, it is at war with, and in opposition to, everything that has to do with "Swiss Punk," "New Wave," or "California Style." And it is in contention with all the design chaos we see happening around us. In my typography classes, we search for new heights but are always building on a tradition based on a teaching foundation of twenty years, not on a style.

New inspiration and vision are necessary not only in Switzerland but everywhere. As an example, Japanese design, among the most exciting today, demonstrates refreshing and innovative ways of designing, using traditional means in conjunction with new electronic tools. And hopefully, professional design schools, where one has the time, energy, and freedom to focus on new approaches, are sources of a new visual language. In my opinion, there exists today only one young designer in Switzerland who represents the Swiss design tradition in a new, fresh, and unique way: Jean Robert from Zurich.



Wolfgang Weingart  
1970-1971  
1972-1973  
1974-1975  
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1980-1981  
1982-1983  
1984-1985  
1986-1987  
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2018-2019  
2020-2021  
2022-2023  
2024-2025

A blue-toned photograph of a chair and a stack of books. The chair is a modern-style chair with a dark frame and a light-colored, perforated seat. A stack of books is placed on the chair's seat. The top book is titled 'Typographie' and 'Sprache'. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, sans-serif font.

One of the highest aims  
of the Typographical  
Studies department of  
the Basel School of Design  
is to reduce or, where  
possible, eliminate the  
great and increasing chaos  
of our times in education  
and training and,  
eventually, in professional  
practice. This aim means  
nothing less than leading  
the individual back into a  
direct relationship with his  
or her own work.

We try to put these ideas  
into practice to a modest  
extent.

WOLFGANG WEINGART

From *Basic Typography: Design with Letters*, by Auedi Röggli.

**EMIGRE:** *There seem to be two directions in your work. There is an experimental side, where it is often apparent that you are trying out a new medium, and then you do entirely different work, like the booklet for the telephone company; very rational, clean design.*

*Which do you enjoy doing the most?*

**RICHARD FEURER (ECLAT):** I don't have a preference. For each project I try to find the appropriate solution, which inevitably generates different results.

**EMIGRE:** *But stylistically your work is very diverse, almost schizophrenic. A lot of people have difficulty with this. There is no sign of personal development. People are suspicious that your style comes from outside, that you copy.*

**RICHARD:** I don't feel that my work is that diverse. I approach my work in a very personal way, but maybe not in the traditional sense. See, to me every project is something new, something that has its own character. When I start designing, I start with a sheet of white paper, and I have no idea how it will be filled or in what direction the design will go. I have no idea where the end is, but that's not a problem. For me the process is very important. The process of designing is like an adventure.

**EMIGRE:** *Do you do a lot of sketches beforehand?*

**RICHARD:** Very few. I start with one point, which can be just an idea, or the idea for a structure, a grid, but not in the classical way. For instance, here (right) I just started with the idea of the circle.

**EMIGRE:** *Where does that come from?*

**RICHARD:** I don't know. I really don't know.

**EMIGRE:** *Let's go back one step. First you meet new clients. They come to you and say, "We need a*

*letterhead. This is what we do, this is what we are about." Do you then talk with them and maybe ask them what they have in mind? Do you show them your work? Are they already familiar with it?*

**RICHARD:** It depends. Sometimes clients are familiar with my work, sometimes not.

**EMIGRE:** *Now about this client, the community center? Did you have a meeting with them?*

**RICHARD:** Yes. We talked at great length about their ideas, what they want to do with the community center; about lots of things. This gave me some ideas and some materials to work with.

**EMIGRE:** *Did the idea for the circle come out of meeting with them? You listened to them and all of a sudden you had a vision of a circle?*

**RICHARD:** No, not at all. When I start designing, I don't really reflect much upon these meetings. The meetings provide me with a general background, but I don't need to reflect on that too much, not when I start designing. I feel that when you start designing, you



**EMIGRE:** *When did you get involved with the Macintosh?*

**RICHARD:** Well,

**EMIGRE:** *What was the attraction?*

**RICHARD:** My work has always been very complex and I thought a computer could be helpful. For years I was looking for a suitable computer, and every time I thought I found a good one, it wouldn't exactly do those things I wanted it to do. The Macintosh was the first computer I encountered that seemed like the perfect tool.

**EMIGRE:** *When did you start use it?*

**RICHARD:** Well, actually, before the Macintosh, in 1986, I saw the USA at an exhibition here in Switzerland, but I didn't have the money then to buy it. Otherwise I would have bought it. It suddenly had possibilities. Then the Macintosh came out in 1988, and in 1989 I had the money to buy a Macintosh Plus.

**EMIGRE:** *Were there any service bureaus in Switzerland at that time?*

**RICHARD:** No, this was all before even PostScript was out. I only had MacDraw, MacPaint and an image writer.

**EMIGRE:** *What did you use it for?*

**RICHARD:** At first I used it to produce little things like invitations and birthday cards. It was just exploring. I was (laughing) bad. Later I slowly started using it more and more in my professional work.

**EMIGRE:** *Do you make or less grow up with the Macintosh?*

**RICHARD:** Yes, and it was such a simple machine to use at first. I made a moving announcement. I did all the art and color separations manually in MacDraw, printed them out on the image writer, and then made stars of them. After that I ran each separation through the same machine, using three different colors. It was great to do all these things myself.

(laughing)



Richard Feurer, architectural letterhead design in Zurich

Richard Feurer, drawing architectural drawing machine





should be relatively free of rational restrictions. You should be aware of what the client wants and the environment of your client, but you should allow yourself some free associating.

I did some posters for the Workers' Union, for weeks I had discussions and meetings, and I talked a great deal about their history and about what's going on now. When I began designing, I encountered a problem. I couldn't start because my mind was filled with too much information. Somehow, each time, there comes a point when I need to let go of everything around me and start with one simple element. In order to come to that point, I try to distract myself, I look around quite a bit. I look at things I like, such as pictures in books and magazines.

**EMIGRE:** *Things that have nothing to do with the assignment?*

**RICHARD:** Right. Just interesting things that are around me. Then I start with one element, think about it, do some manipulations, scribble around it. After this, I begin to look for other elements, other ideas, and finally the idea for the whole



Richard Haines  
Illustration given to David and  
Emigres.

syntax. So I build step by step. It grows. For me the design process is a constant flipping between intuition and reflection. Sometimes the problem is that there is too much reflection, sometimes too much intuition.

**EMIGRE:** *So obviously, with the booklet for the telephone company, there was a lot more reflection than intuition involved?*

**RICHARD:** Yes, here the fact that it had to function in a particular way inevitably influenced the entire design. It came out of a much more rational approach. But that doesn't mean that my more intuitive designs are irrational. For instance, when I design a letterhead like the one for the community center, you should see it with the letter written on it. I always think about how it is used. It doesn't look like it, but there is some type of a grid behind it. It might look chaotic, but there is a certain structure behind it all.

**EMIGRE:** *It's clear to you, but do you expect the people who use this to experience that? Are you not afraid that people might experience this as chaos?*

**RICHARD:** I don't care about that. Well, maybe it's a bit dangerous to say that, because I do care. It's more that I believe that people are aware of these underlying structures. It's like when you observe human beings. I can't see your structure, but within you somehow is a structure, a way of thinking, a way of living. And I don't need to analyze you in order to understand or like you. Because

everything you do or say speaks for itself and somehow shows me a structure. But it's not something that you can easily define. There are different levels of how people or objects can speak to you. And I think that's true for design too. I don't want you to consciously see, define and understand the structures behind these designs.

**EMIGRE:** *What did the client say about the letterhead?*

**RICHARD:** They are really happy with it.

**EMIGRE:** *But what did they say exactly? Sometimes clients will make remarks, unexpected comments, about the things you design.*

**RICHARD:** I often get remarks that my work is not really design, that it's art.

**EMIGRE:** *People are bothered by that?*

**RICHARD:** Yes. Because for most people society consists of boxes. You have the work box, the leisure time box - society has built a little box for everything. And there is no merging. I think that when I do a design like this letterhead -- and it's true for most of my work -- I tend to mix these boxes. And some people are really confused by that.

**EMIGRE:** *But when they come to you, they first look at your work. They know they'll get a heavy dose of personal expression as art. They know what they're getting themselves into, don't they?*

**RICHARD:** In the last year this has slightly changed. There are more and more people who want to question conventions. They are wondering around in other boxes, or in space. They are searching for themselves or new ways to live. So they are willing to explore and try new things. But then sometimes it happens that they get shocked. When they look at my portfolio, they are looking from the outside in, they are removed from the designs, because they are not for their own company. When I do the work for them, they are confronted with themselves, and maybe that. And often they tell me that it's great work, but that it's not for them.

**EMIGRE:** *Is there a particular formula that you design by?*

**RICHARD:** When I started designing, I thought that I knew what I was doing, but I couldn't verbalize it, simply because I never approached design quite rationally. It's easier when I look back, I can explain it better. I can formalize it now. I think it's better to look backward and think about the things you are doing and formalize, than to invent formulae and apply them to the things you will be doing in the future.

**EMIGRE:** *You mean that you never start out with a formula?*

**RICHARD:** Right.

**EMIGRE:** *Is it just designs. But where does it all come from? Where do all these ideas come from?*

**RICHARD:** I think it has to do with me trying to find some kind of orientation in this world. Graphic design has given me an opportunity to do this, where living is a very chaotic world. Religion, social behavior, borders, they're all breaking down. There are no rules anymore and I have to figure out (or myself) what my ethics are, what my religion is. I have to find for myself a way to make this world a little less strange.

**EMIGRE:** *But if the world is so chaotic to you, why not make it simple, why not clean it up? This is what Jan Tschichold and Emil Ruder did.*

**RICHARD:** But that had nothing to do with cleaning up. People such as Ruder had a vision, they invented a certain clear and rational approach to which they wanted the entire world to adapt. And I think today you can't say that. There are so many points of view and some of them will be exactly "right."

**EMIGRE:** *What's wrong with cleaning things up? What's wrong with straightening messages?*

**RICHARD:** But Emil Ruder was not cleaning up, he was reducing, and in the process he lost touch with emotion and spontaneity, which are very valuable human characteristics. When people look at my work and feel it is chaotic, it is because they want to understand and rationalize everything they see in a one-dimensional way.

**EMIGRE:** *But it makes sense that people want to understand.*

**RICHARD:** On the one hand, yes. But as I said before, with this kind of one-dimensional thinking, I've found an

problem-solving only, we'll miss out on other valuable emotional dimensions. If people don't immediately understand something, that doesn't mean it's chaotic.

**EMIGRE:** *But we have artists to deal with the things you talk about. Artists have the abilities to visualize all those different emotional dimensions that we have inside of ourselves. We're talking about a letterhead, why would you want to be so expressive on a letterhead?*

**RICHARD:** This brings me back to those boxes we talked about earlier. It has to do with the art and design boxes, where design always has to be functional and subservient to the message, all this black and white thinking. I try to bring this separation, these differences together. Why not have art in everyday life, surrounding us. Instead of saying, "Here is the museum, here I get my culture?"

**EMIGRE:** *Then why isn't the telephone booklet done a bit more experimentally?*

**RICHARD:** It's a simple answer. It's not because I think that the telephone book is a strictly functional object. I wish I could do something a bit more crazy with it. It's just that each project has very specific parameters.

**EMIGRE:** *Do you feel that living in Switzerland has inhibited your development as a graphic designer?*

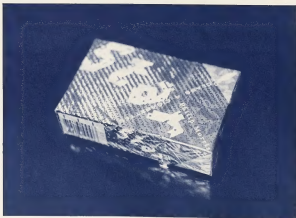
**RICHARD:** I grew up in Zurich, a Protestant city. I went to school during the beginnings of Swiss design, with all its rational thinking, and all the connections to the Bauhaus, etc. I grew up with this. But I was always in opposition to what I felt was presented as the absolute truth. However, I did realize that structure was very important. And although my work looks like the complete opposite, I feel it was made possible by the experience of my Swiss background and education. My work is perhaps the result of a strong and rational design tradition, combined with the realization that the present has different values and attitudes that need to be addressed.



Richard Kromm  
Protestant prayer in Basel 1950  
poster



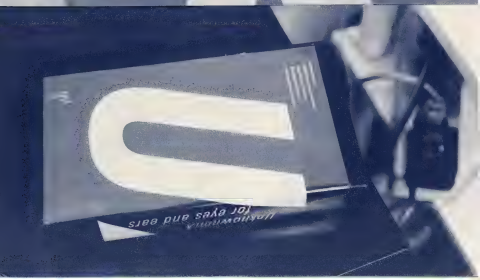
Richard Kromm  
L'attesa per i nuovi design  
studio



Richard Kromm  
1950 cigarette package  
for Billy Moon

The students are very  
emancipated; they don't  
look at you as a teacher,  
like we did at Ruder.  
To us, Ruder was a kind of  
God.

HANS-RUDOLF LUTZ



**HANS-RUDOLF LUTZ:** I don't know if you were aware of it, but Zurich in the early eighties went through some very rough political times. There were a lot of youth riots. It had a lot to do with the arts and music scene in Zurich. The late seventies, with punk and new wave, was quite shocking for Switzerland. It was something entirely new and difficult to deal with for this primarily

Calvinist country. See, Zurich is a very corporate city, every square meter is used and heavily exploited financially. So during these punk and new wave times, there was never any room for bands to practice. There were no cellars or buildings where you didn't have to pay outrageous rents. There were no outlets, no places for concerts. There used to be one youth center in Zurich that was subsidized by the city but it was closed because they had to build a highway. During that same week we also had to vote (we vote about everything here in Zurich), about a 40 million dollar opera house. This generated a tremendous reaction from young people in Zurich, a real explosion of energy. There had always been a sort of underground music and art scene, but now it was centering around this unrest. This created a lot of new music; there were fanzines, there were people like Peter Bäder doing fantastic posters. He was very important for depicting it all, through his posters.

He was also involved in a lot of work for RecRet (Recommended Records), a local record label.

The Bewegung (the Movement), which was the name for all the young people who got actively involved in this cultural uprising, squatted and eventually took over an old factory they called the rote Fabrik (red factory) and turned it into what is now Zurich's prime cultural center. They even published their own newspaper, the Fabrik Zeitung.

#### EMIGRE: What happened to the Bewegung?

**HANS-RUDOLF:** Capitalists have the ability to use the energies coming out of the opposition. They know how to use this energy for themselves, how to integrate it. They are very clever. For instance, now, when the tourists come to town, they'll go to the Rote Fabrik. It's become a tourist attraction. The Bewegung has now disintegrated more or less, which was inevitable.

But those times will have a lasting effect on cultural life in Zurich. What I liked the most about all of this was that

the Bewegung took command of everything. It created a new opposition covering the visual arts, writing, graphic design, theater, videos, etc. And it all came out of the frustration that young people had about their own culture. They felt there was not enough support for cultural events. In Germany, for instance, the government subsidizes places where young people can make their own culture. In Switzerland, they didn't do this until recently.

#### EMIGRE: Even though Switzerland is a rather wealthy country,

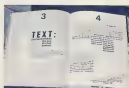
**HANS-RUDOLF:** Yes, but that's the mercantile nature of Switzerland. It would not be immediately profitable financially or economically to subsidize young people's culture. That's also why there are no art schools in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. There are design schools, but these are for people who want to study specific professions, such as interior decoration, graphic design, textile design, or photography. But no fine art; if you want to study fine art, they'll tell you to go to Germany. Eventually, the Swiss will change their ideas about this, because

the Germans have started to complain about wealthy Switzerland sending their young artists across the border to get an education.

#### EMIGRE: Have the tumultuous times in Zurich had any lasting

As an important part of my teaching in Lucerne, we do student editions. An assignment, I have the students put together printed publications. They have to do everything themselves, from choosing the topic, to verbal formulation, to visual formulation. They do the writing, photography, design, typesetting, halftone, bookbinding, everything. We make our own negatives and plates, and print them on a small Agfa offset press in quantities of two copies, so that everyone in school can get one. Doing this gives the students a clear idea of where graphic design fits in. After graduating, when they start working for an agency, at least they will know the place of design and what comes before and what comes after. This will also give designers a greater understanding of other disciplines such as writing etc. Swiss designers don't even understand the message that they have to communicate. After an office complex they are surrounded by designers who make completely different statements on a visual level.

Hans-Rudolf Lutz has graduated from the type



Hans-Rudolf Lutz showing a book designed for Andre Gysin

Andre is one of my students in Lucerne. He did a book about a demonstration at a nuclear power plant. At a starting point, he used a transcription of a speech by someone during the demonstration. The speech was printed in a newspaper the other day. In this, he added those levels of information: from the photographs, which she shot during the demonstration, second the signs, which she designed; and third, the statements and conversations, which she added in smaller type, in this new context the message, the newspaper article, is intensified and becomes very strong. This publication was one of many statements that made it finally impossible to build this nuclear power plant.

**effect on graphic design? You mentioned graphic designers such as Peter Ruder, who built his reputation on these events.**

**HANS-RÜEDI:** Yes, I think that people like Peter Ruder, Polly Bertram, Daniel Volkart and Rolf Rischbacher have progressed in a new and vibrant direction that will have a significant influence on design in Switzerland. And this is not traditional

Swiss design anymore. This has nothing to do with Basel, or Emil

Ruder, or Wolfgang Weingart. It has more to do with the Bewegung and with the things that happened here politically in the early eighties. People in Zurich don't realize this, but very important things started here. ECLAT and Frame by Frame are examples. They are already a commercial outgrowth -- and I don't mean this negatively -- but they are a commercial exponent of the early eighties unrest.

The results are very creative; they're trying out new things, and some of this is now trickling into the mainstream.

**EMIGRE: Is it still Swiss design?**

**HANS-RÜEDI:** Well, it all depends on what you consider Swiss design. Traditional Swiss design was not uniquely Swiss to begin with. This very clean, one typeface, grid-based school of design of the late fifties happened elsewhere too, in Germany and Holland, for example.

**EMIGRE: Do you consider the work of these young designers in Zurich to be significant?**

**HANS-RÜEDI:** Yes, although the Swiss people will be the last to recognize that [fact]. They still don't recognize or acknowledge the significance of the work of designers such as Wolfgang Weingart, for instance.

**EMIGRE: What is it that makes these young designers' work so significant?**

**HANS-RÜEDI:** One thing that sets them apart from traditional Swiss design is that they don't use a set of rules to design by. For them design is an organic process. They work within a system, but it allows them to do anything. There is a very strong and precise concept, but it leaves them room to open up. And that's the power and strength of a lot of Swiss design. If you can marry this structured thinking and the openness in creative thinking, it's the perfect combination. And I think that's what Polly and Daniel are doing. Personally, I think that they are doing some of the most important work in Switzerland at the moment. I like the work of ECLAT too, but I like the roughness of Polly's work more. Polly and Daniel's work has the appearance of being very open, or light perhaps, but it has a lot of hooks in it that you can grab onto, which will hold your attention.

**EMIGRE: Have these times affected you?**

**HANS-RÜEDI:** Yes, it has made teaching very interesting, although these are both exciting and difficult times in terms of teaching. We're dealing with a new situation now. The students are very emancipated; they don't look at you as a teacher, like we did at Ruder. To us, Ruder was a kind of God. This has changed. You cannot be a God anymore. You have to be schizophrenic in a way. What I mean by that is that on the one hand you must have a profile, you must be a practiced designer doing your own things, and you must show your work to your students, otherwise you will not be accepted by them. This is the egocentric side of the teacher job: to work and do your own thing. On the other hand, in school, you have to be able to help the students realize and develop their own individual ideas and skills. To do this, you must be able to listen and understand persons other than yourself. This is very difficult to combine with your

egocentric side.

**EMIGRE:** The exciting story I hear from young designers is that there are so many influences from outside, so many opposing ideas about type and legibility and approach that there is a tendency to dismiss it all. Instead, they try to find their own personal ways of dealing with graphic design, almost by not looking at other design. To this point of your teaching philosophy?

**HANS-RÜEDI:** Well, I don't try to teach them a philosophy of design, because that's stretched. That's always been sensitive. But you're right, it is a difficult time for students as well. I feel easier for you. For instance, has a philosophy of design, he said what was good or bad. And when he said was backed up by groups of designers who would say this is good type and this is bad type. It was all very clear-cut. It was also something you could oppose. If you didn't agree with it, you could go to him and say, "don't I understand it?" It made making decisions easier. Today it's very difficult because you can do everything. The teachers were I feel you that you can't do that or that because it is wrong.

**EMIGRE:** These are a lot of people who still feel that we do not design lessons, people on pedestals, whom we can look up to, who can lead the way.

**HANS-RÜEDI:** Yes, of course. Because that's the easy way to go although it's a question of power too, you know.

**EMIGRE:** If you don't have a teaching philosophy, what is your approach?

**HANS-RÜEDI:** Well, I teach typography, and typography is a lot of fun. Kind of all, no one comes to school to study typography. People come to design school because they want to make posters, or do posters, or three-dimensional things. So it is very difficult to motivate people to study typography. Therefore, one important aspect of my teaching is to motivate. And especially in the beginning, this motivation part has to be very open. It is very difficult to teach typography in the way, because in a sense it is a practice that eventually, during their education, these students will become more interested in typography. Later I become more particular. Try to question things more, ask why it is like this, what does that mean. Then I become more conventional. The danger of this open approach, and you can see this with a lot of teachers in Switzerland, is that they don't have an opinion anymore. They're always try to be the students. "Yes, just go on, it's very nice what you are doing."

Another thing that I try to teach is that you have to look at typography under a certain, typography cannot exist as a vacuum. I try to make students realize that typography is only one part of a much larger system. I don't like specialization. This is what I dislike about the whole graphic design scene, especially in Switzerland. Designers are a ways waiting until they get a command to do something. Very few people like you will say "I want to create a magazine" and then do it. I assume designers who do this. In Switzerland, there are no design magazines like *Design*. Every designer has an opinion and they all love to complain, but nobody will say "let's do something about it." And there are so many ways to get your ideas and opinions out into the world.

**EMIGRE:** One thing we have to do with Emigre is to encourage and show people that it's possible to publish a magazine with limited resources, which of course is made possible by the microcomputer.

**HANS-RÜEDI:** Yes, it is what I like about the microcomputer. There are other ways to publish magazines or books, but the microcomputer has made it a lot easier. It brings all specialists back together. This is very important because if you stay in the position where graphic designers are always the last people involved in the process of producing printed matter, we'll lose touch with making important decisions concerning visual communication. A lot of important decisions about visual matters are now made by people who are not designers, people who are not visually educated. Usually when an assignment comes to a designer, the important decisions have already been made. As I said a lot for the designer to do is to arrange things, to put on a poster.

**EMIGRE:** Do you do any commercial design?

**HANS-RÜEDI:** Well, I do some occasional design work for outside clients. Some posters, some books, but only if I can work closely with the client. I'm not very interested in producing books by myself. Especially visual books about visual communication, because most books about visual communication are made by people like Wolfgang Weingart, or others, people who are very intelligent. They are doing research by us, but it's always after the fact. This is probably the most important thing the graphic design sector has to change.

## ..EMIGRE: What made you come to Zurich?

**PETER BÄDER:** I had a job as a draftsman. I drew houses. But I decided I wanted to go to Zurich, to art school. I started school around 1978. And during the first two or three years I just did what the teachers told me to do and it was not a very interesting time. The last two years in school

**EMIGRE:** Did you do any apprentice work during your education?

**PETER:** Yes. After your third year in school you have to go and work for three months as an apprentice for an agency. I ended up working with an agency in Zurich called G&C. I was curious to see what these big businesses, these big graphic design companies were all about. I did that for three months and it was really funny because that was during the beginning of the youth unrest. The first big demonstration that took place was centered around the opera building. The city had planned to build a super-expensive opera building and it got young people very angry because they weren't getting any money for these cultural claims. This particular demonstration was more or less the start of the cultural movement, which lasted around two years. I was the one who designed the shirts for the demonstrators. Some of G&C's clients were also giving the posters around on people to vote in favor of the opera building.

were much more interesting. This was in 1980-81, during the time of the youth unrest and the heyday of the *Bewegung* (Movement). We had demonstrations and fights in the streets.

It was a great time to be in school. The *Bewegung* had its headquarters just 200 meters from the school. It was called the Autonomie Youth Center.

**EMIGRE:**

*I thought the Rote Fabrik (Red Factory) was its center.*

**PETER:** The Rote Fabrik was more established than the AYC. The AYC was really just a room. It was an autonomous space, which meant it was closed to policemen most of the time. Then of course there were problems. More and more people just came to hang out, and later on there were a lot of problems with drugs. But it was a great idea to have this space.

There was a real need for such spaces in Zurich. During the early eighties young people took control, and finally some alternative cultural spaces were created. The Rote Fabrik was squatted and provided a provisional place for alternative culture. The AYC, too, was squatted and in 1982 we had a cinema that was used for many alternative events. The cinema had formerly been a porno theater. The owner of this cinema rented it out to us for very little money. It was a kind of sponsorship. There was a lot of experimental movies shown and RecRec (an independent record label in Zurich) and other people organized concerts there. Since I lived with some of the people who were involved in the *Bewegung*, I ended up producing many of the announcements and posters for all these spaces.

**EMIGRE:** How long were you in school?

**PETER:** I was actually there for five years. I finished and got a diploma. School offered a great working place. I made some of my posters for the events of this period in school.

**EMIGRE:** They accepted them as school projects?

**PETER:** Yes, more or less.

**Emigre:** Was it a valuable experience to be in school?

**PETER:** I never experienced it as school, it was more like a working place, especially during the last two years. We got very open assignments that you worked on for a period of time without much supervision, and on the final day when the project was due, there was a critique.

**EMIGRE:** It's not like Basel then?

**PETER:** Well, I don't know exactly what they do in Basel.

**EMIGRE:** They teach students how to structure type, how to be typographers. They do a lot of tedious exercises and experiments with type composition, line spacing, letterspacing, things like that.

**PETER:** We did that during the first two years. However, after those two years, I didn't know exactly what it was that I had learned. Anyway, for me it was necessary to be in Zurich. See, I grew up in the country. Going to art school was not half as important as being in Zurich. When you grow up in the country and you move to the big city to go to art school, it's almost embarrassing to say this, but it made me feel very proud.

**EMIGRE:** Are you aware of the tradition of graphic design in Switzerland?

**PETER:** I have to say that I don't know much about the tradition in graphic design in general. You see, I don't see exhibitions much, and I don't have many graphic design books and annuals. That was never



Peter Bäder (left) and Michael Hoenig (right) at the Autonomie Youth Center in Zurich



Peter Müller:  
Rote Fabrik, the first poster  
designed by Müller  
for the band Sonic Youth

very important for me.

**EMIGRE:** Didn't you learn about the work of Emil Ruder or Armin Hofmann or Müller-Brockmann when you were in school?

**PETER:** No, not really. During the early eighties, when I was in school,

everything was affected by this youth unrest, including education. We had sort of a miniature revolution in our school. Actually, the educational system of the school was changed due to these happenings. I remember one new teacher they hired. He was quite famous, although I forgot his name. . . **RICHARD FEUER:** Gottschalk.

**PETER:** Yes, right, Gottschalk. There was a big fight because everybody wanted Weingart to come to teach in Zurich. Gottschalk was in school for two months and he had this vicious argument with the entire class, or at least most of it. This was the class that Polly Bertman and Daniel Volkart were in. They openly proclaimed they didn't want him as a teacher. The students put up an ultimatum: either he left or they would walk out. So the students got rid of him. This was very much in accordance with the time. After this, there was continued discussion about the educational system and the function of the teachers in general. So I can't say exactly what I learned in school, but it was a very exciting time politically. During my last two years, I spent most of my time doing posters for Rectec. They told me I could work for them for half a year. So I liked being in school because I could do what I wanted, and it offered a place to do it. Nobody said it was wrong or right, instead they said just do it.

**EMIGRE:** Did you ever think about what you would do after school? Did you go to school thinking you'd become a graphic designer?

**PETER:** I always liked working with pictures, I liked drawing comics. It was my hobby. But I wasn't thinking about my career. I never thought about having my own agency or office.

**EMIGRE:** How did you actually get involved in doing the flyers and posters for all these events?

**PETER:** I was living with the people who organized some of the demonstrations and concerts. There were a lot of meetings and I was right in the middle of it all. When they needed flyers, I ended up doing them.

**EMIGRE:** You just did them for free?

**PETER:** Oh yes, sure. I did a lot of work for free.

**EMIGRE:** Still?

**PETER:** Yes, sometimes.

**EMIGRE:** So how do you make a living?

**PETER:** I have a really inexpensive apartment that I'm sharing with friends. I'm in a lucky position. In general, I don't need much money to live on. I can get by on very little. I live in a 300 francs-a-month flat, and I have a studio that I share with some other people. There are five of us, and the place is twice as big as this kitchen. But we're never all there at the same time, so it's working out fine.

**EMIGRE:** Is there a budget for these posters?

**PETER:** Not really. I have to produce these as inexpensively as possible. In order to keep cost down, I also do a lot of the typography and shoot all the film. I have access to a darkroom that I also share with a few other people.

**EMIGRE:** You provide the plates with the negatives?

**PETER:** Postcards. Posters in Switzerland are paid to be like to make plates.

**EMIGRE:** Do you go to the printer when they print your work?

**PETER:** No, I just hand them the plates and I don't have the results until they're printed. I never make mistakes at any of that stuff. It's always a surprise when they come back from the printer. It's like they said: "hey there on tape."

**EMIGRE:** Do you have a particular result in mind?

**PETER:** Sometimes. But it always comes out looking different from what I expected. Sometimes I love it, sometimes I hate it. But what I think doesn't matter as much as what the consumer thinks.

**EMIGRE:** What are the reactions from the client, the Rote Fabrik?

**PETER:** Most of the time they use my work. They always come back to me, so I guess they like it. However, you should look upon me as a regular designer and not a relationship. It's in my name, the Rote Fabrik, the Rote Fabrik, all these people and happenings, and my work is just a visual representation of it.

**EMIGRE:** Your posters, sometimes as you, because some of the accepted norms of typographic communication. This makes it difficult for me to imagine your working methods. Is there a method?

**PETER:** It's more a methodology. I cut a lot of existing imagery that I find in magazines, which I then shuffle around on the page until it looks right. But it's hard to say exactly how I work. I don't approach it too methodically. It's not exactly like school. In school they tell you to first think about projects and sometimes make you write down a concept. There's nothing wrong with that, you have a lot of time, but after two, three years, I had enough of this thinking, this rehashing. Sometimes I think it's necessary to work more with the heart than with the head. And when you start rehashing, you tend to forget about the heart.

**EMIGRE:** In some of your most recent posters, it's almost as if you are trying to organize your material more. For the first time, I see justified type and flushed-left type. Are you maturing out?

**PETER:** I would agree that it's a lot harder these days to be as angry as I was in the early eighties. Things have gotten down-right a lot. A lot of the people of the Rote Fabrik now have families, wife, new careers. I don't think these people still reflect a different attitude. Or maybe I do learn something in school and it's only now coming to the surface.

**EMIGRE:** It's not exactly traditional Swiss design yet. It's more like Armin Hofmann on drugs.

**EMIGRE:** What is Armin Hofmann?

**PETER:** He's for that chess I saw last?

**EMIGRE:** It's an interesting point. In Switzerland people don't know Hofmann very well. It's the same with Müller-Brockmann or Ruder.

**PETER:** I told you, I don't know much about design history.

**EMIGRE:** That's why you're such an original designer. You're free of preconceptions.

**PETER:** I wouldn't know.

What do you think about the book?

**Editorial Notes.**  
 \*App. Answer for the Right System  
 according my computer for the measurement  
 and I'll be looking for some  
 from the internet for an answer to the question asked  
 and I'm grateful.

PETER: Sometimes I like this "high" design, this really clean design. But

PETER: No, because it was not necessary.

PETER: No. I don't care about that.

**EMIGRE:** Why not?

**EMICRE:** Do you have something against museums in particular?

**PETER:** I think you have to live now and maybe concern yourself with the future. I have a problem with being so obsessed with the past. History is behind us. Of course there is nothing wrong with knowing history, you have to be aware of your past. But not because if you know the past, you'll be better prepared for the future. This is what my teachers wanted me to believe. And this is absolute nonsense. We will always make the same mistakes.

**EMIGRE:** Do you have a problem with being included in this issue?  
In a sense, Emigre functions a bit as a museum too.

**PETER:** How many copies do you print?

EMIGRE: Four or five thousand

**PETER:** That's not so much. I have a greater affinity with small operations like yours[] as opposed to the Establishment.

**EMIGRE:** We're not the Establishment yet, but who knows? We're hoping.

**PETER:** Yes it can happen. Actually, I have an Establishment job now too. I teach at the Kunstgewerbeschule here in Zurich. I teach typography. They asked me if I wanted to do this for two months. It's only six students, and we're in the middle of a project, we're doing a poster.

**EMIGRE:** Do you enjoy it?

**PETER:** I'm having a few problems. Getting up early for class is especially tough; eight o'clock in the morning. And then we have to do a lot of talking about the project. It gets a bit stressful to talk about design for four hours straight.



**EMILIO:** Do you do any research for your clients?

**PHILLIPS:** No, not really. I have [one] room. I'm not affected by anything except lack of money. There are really low budget projects. I design them as I'm using the materials.

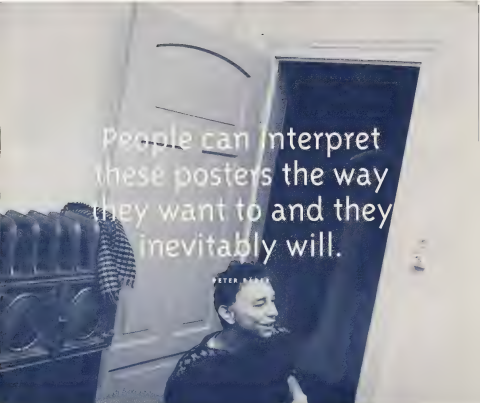
**BRUCE:** Do you like the American  
music? (chuck)

IMM: You know, I never ask myself these questions. But whenever I see this poster, I think it is one of the better ones I've done. I can't explain why I like the idea that you CANT immediately read the headline, that the image is a bit cryptic. You just see the leg and the dog, which are both very ambiguous images. People can interpret the way they want to and then conclude a story.



**Verfahren:** *Verfahren* ist ein Prozess, der die Schritte zur Erreichung eines bestimmten Ziels beschreibt. Es ist eine systematische Vorgehensweise, die in einem bestimmten Bereich oder einer bestimmten Aufgabe angewendet wird.







1

**EMIGRE:** Who are your clients?

**POLLY BERTRAM:** For the last six years we have been involved in the design of posters and programs for the Theater Am Neumarkt. But we recently stopped doing them because the theater got a new director who changed everything, including hiring a new designer.

**EMIGRE:** He didn't like your work?

**POLLY:** She didn't like it at all.

(Looking at posters shown on the right)

**EMIGRE:** Are these designed according to a grid?

Conversation with Polly Bertram and Daniel Volkart, 1998/1999, Zurich

**POLLY:** No, it's more that they are designed

according to a very strict concept. The grid is in

our head. There's a very basic idea or structure behind it, but they're not created on a grid in a traditional, technical sense.

**EMIGRE:** You don't use a Macintosh, do you?

**POLLY:** No. They're all done conventionally

**EMIGRE:** They are very large!

**POLLY:** It's called the "Welt" (World) format. It's a standard size poster. There are standard size poster boards all over Switzerland that they post them onto.

**EMIGRE:** Now big are the mechanicals?

**DANIEL VOLKART:** About one eighth of the actual size.

**EMIGRE:** Are they sheet-offset printed?

**DANIEL:** No, they're silkscreened.

**EMIGRE:** Do you work on these posters together?

**DANIEL:** Yes. The two of us, and often in cooperation with the photographer Jul Keyser.

**EMIGRE:** How do you work together? Do you sit next to each other behind the drawing table?

**POLLY:** Yes, we do.

**EMIGRE:** You move stuff around on the paper together? Don't you end up fighting a lot?

**POLLY:** No, we work together, we're very supportive.

**DANIEL:** It's like playing tennis.

**EMIGRE:** How come I haven't come across any of these posters in Zurich? Or in design annuals or Graphis?

**DANIEL:** We never submitted work to competitions unless we were invited to submit specific pieces. But all these posters, actually, are in the permanent collection of the Museum für Gestaltung here in Zurich.

**EMIGRE:** How do you explain these complex concepts to your clients?

**POLLY:** We sometimes have very intelligent clients.

**DANIEL:** Yes, we get very good and intellectual input. There is a lot of stimulating dialogue with the client.

**EMIGRE:** What's this building (building at the top left of the posters)?

**POLLY:** That's a building that was recently changed into a bank.

**EMIGRE:** Why is it on the poster?

**DANIEL:** It's only a facade, with large construction cranes in front of it. It's very Zurich-like. There is a lot of building going on in Zurich, continuously. We wanted to make a statement about Zurich.

**EMIGRE:** Now about the waving man and woman?

**DANIEL:** Both figures represent the spectators, a he and a she theater spectator.

**EMIGRE:** Do people ever complain about the typography being difficult to read?

**POLLY:** Yes, all the time. But if you want to read it you can. At first it doesn't look as if you could.

**EMIGRE:** Was that a problem for the new director?



Polly Bertram  
Daniel Volkart  
Theater Am Neumarkt  
Zürich, 1998/1999



**DANIEL:** Yes, we think so. There was quite a bit of disagreement about aesthetic principles.

**EMIGRE:** *How long do you spend on each poster?*

**DANIEL:** It varies. On the average I would say one and a half weeks for each person.

**POLLY:** These already have a concept behind them, which makes the production go a bit faster.

**EMIGRE:** *They are very additive. Especially the six poster series that builds onto itself. Maybe it's good that you got fired. These posters would have been illegible in the end.*

**POLLY:** We knew it was going to be a six poster series.

**EMIGRE:** *I'm trying to imagine how you created this layering.*

**POLLY:** A lot of people say that it looks as if they were produced on the computer. But it's all done with films and photocopy.

**EMIGRE:** *You have a reprocamera in your studio?*

**DANIEL:** Yes, that's absolutely necessary.

(We're looking at more posters.)

**POLLY:** These posters must be a homage to Weingart.

**EMIGRE:** *Why do you think that?*

**POLLY:** Because they're not exactly easy to read. The typography is a bit hard to decipher. However, he would not be the only one complaining about this.

**EMIGRE:** *Some of his work requires a bit of extra attention, a bit of work to decipher.*

**POLLY:** Yes, some of his work was quite experimental, but out of it he invented a dogma, which I don't like.

**DANIEL:** The other problem we have with his work is that it has become part of Swiss design culture in a perverted way by lending itself to commercial simplification. We are fighting against that.

**EMIGRE:** *Why?*

**POLLY:** Because everything visual around us is influenced by this so-called traditional Swiss design.

**EMIGRE:** *But Weingart was already trying to move away from that.*

**DANIEL:** I know that he thinks so, but to us it's still very Swiss. His intentions are best realized in his personal work.

**EMIGRE:** *Is there anything Swiss about your work?*

**POLLY:** Our work is very precise. That makes it Swiss. But it wants to open up ways to go further.

**EMIGRE:** *At the risk of looking chaotic.*

**DANIEL:** Oh?

**EMIGRE:** *This is not meant negatively. I like the complexity, or chaos as some people would call it. You don't agree it's kind of chaotic?*

**POLLY:** No, there's a certain kind of structure, but it's a very complicated structure.

**EMIGRE:** *But if my aunt looked at these posters, she would be very confused.*

**POLLY:** Yes, but if she really looked at the mess we live in, she would be confused, too. But she does not, because she sees only those things she is familiar with.

**EMIGRE:** *Some people think it is the designer's role to bring order into this chaotic world. You seem to add to the chaos.*

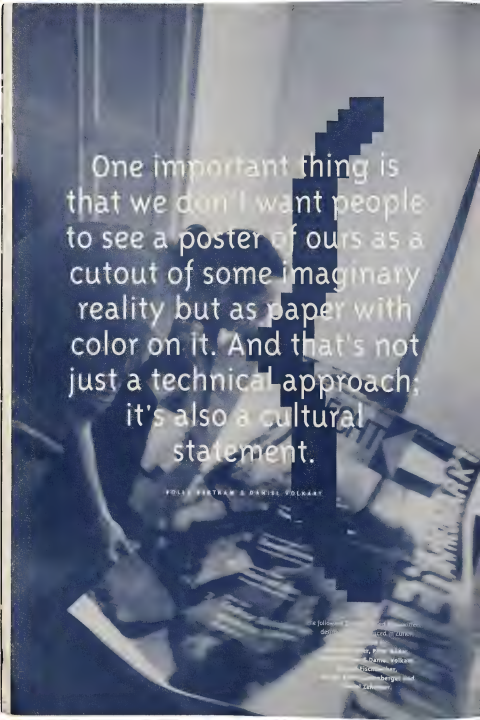
**POLLY:** These posters have a very strict order. There is the order of multiplication, of color, an accented two-dimensional order, an order of time, and many other orders.

**EMIGRE:** *You don't think it's a bit too sophisticated? You're not worried that your audience might not pick up on this complex sense of order?*

**POLLY:** Yes, but this order is very similar to the world we live in. You look at the world around you, and it



[ CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 ]



One important thing is that we don't want people to see a poster of ours as a cutout of some imaginary reality but as paper with color on it. And that's not just a technical approach; it's also a cultural statement.

POLLY BERTRAM & DANIEL VOLKART

The following 20 posters and 100 posters  
designed and created in Zurich  
by Polly Bertram, Peter Kuhn,  
Daniel Volkart, and Hans-Joachim  
Volkart. The posters were  
designed and created in Zurich  
by Polly Bertram, Peter Kuhn,  
Daniel Volkart, and Hans-Joachim  
Volkart.

# HELVETICA VOLLFETT

## helvetica extra bold

Es war einmal eine Zeit, da schien alles klar. There was a time when everything was für die Gestalterinnen. Die Aufgabe das crystal clear for designers. Visual expression and the Typografie war son and typography didn't have to be questioned. Sie sollten zu einem möglichst ad- tioned - after all, they were simply vehicles for conveying information in the least often- haffen. sive way.

Wie einst die LogikerInnen und MathematikerInnen als Avant-Gardistinnen des Verbal- isms were once the trailblazers of verbal- lan eilten nur die GestalterInnen und Typo- facts and figures, so the designers and graphies als VertreterInnen des Visuellen typographies - as ambassadors of the dem strahlenden Leitern einer ideologie- visual expression - hastened after that freies Sprache nach. «Wille zur Ordnung, zur Klarheit, Wille zum Wesentlichen vorzuziehungen, zur Verscheidung, Wille zur Objektivität, anstelle der Subjektivität, Wille zur architektonischen Beherrschung der Fläche und des Raumes», das war, in den Worten Josef Müller-Brockmanns, eines ihrer führenden Verordnungen, das unangefochtene Programm.

gleaming guiding star of an ideology-free Entstanden in den kleinen, ordentlichen language. In the words of Josef Müller-Brockmann, one of the leading expository-functional Aufhebung der Gen- nents) the uncontented objective was «the staltung zum äusseren und inneren. Im michtig- search order and clarity, the desire to growen, weniger ordentlich und etwas penetrate the essential; to condense; the dreckigen Land der USA wurde Swiss wahre for objectivity in the place of subject- Design gar zum offiziellen Corporate De- tivity, and the effort to architecturally sign. Der Enig daraus Schweizer Export- master surface and space.» Geschick- schlagers war unbestritten. Die Geschich- te also konnte weitergehen.

It began in the neat and tidy little country of Switzerland. From here the triumphal Doch plötzlich war nicht mehr alles so klar. manich of this realistic and functional in- Oder war es gar nicht immer so klar? gree- interpretation of design was pioneered. In the 1960s Wie dem auch sei, jedenfalls (Klarheit, nighty, vast and less ordered country of in den achtziger Jahren im Heimatland der the USA, Suisse design became synony- Helvetica and des flackernden grafische Anlei- nens for official corporate design. The sweten auf, die auf den ersten Blick wenig ge- ones of this Swiss export blockbuster was meinsam zu haben schienen mit dem hoch- indistinguishable. And the story could be con- tinued...

But suddenly everything was not so appar- ent any more. Or had it really always been that clear? Be that as it may, during the sixties in Helvetica and the design grid's native country, graphics flourished that at first sight seemed to have little in common with the realistic-functional legacy. Was the tradition of solid Swiss graphic design at an end?

Inspired by the Californian magazine «design», a few young designers met on a murky winter's evening in Zurich for an experiment. They wanted to discover what

makes young graphic design from Zurich, Switzerland, sick. In 24 pages of Enigme you can see what has become of that dream of objectivity and clear form in the largest city of that small country.

Participants in this discussion were: Polly Bertram, graphic designer, born in 1953 in Hamburg and raised in Switzerland. Since 1981 she has been working with Daniel Volkart in their own studio, mainly for cultural institutions, political organizations and underground movements.

Daniel Volkart, graphic designer, born in 1959 in Winterthur. Since 1981 Polly's partner in their own studio.

Roland Fischbacher, visual designer, born in 1956 in a neat and peaceful small town in the Swiss midlands. He works as freelance graphic designer mainly on projects for independent newspapers, and in poster design for cultural institutions.

Peter Böder, graphic designer, born in 1957 in Schleitheim. He works as a freelance graphic designer, mainly in poster design for concerts, underground (altern- ative) culture, and publishers.

Richard Feurer, graphic designer, born in 1954 in Zurich. He has been working on his own since 1980. In 1988 he founded

lich-funktionalen Erbe ist die Tradition der konkreten Schweizer Grafik am Ende? Auf Anregung der kalifornischen Zeitschrift «enigme» trafen sich an einem dunklen Winterabend im Januar 1990 ein paar junge GestalterInnen aus Zürich zu einem Experiment. Sie sollten gestalten und diskutieren zum Ausdruck bringen, was junge Schweizer Grafik aus Zürich ist. Auf 24 Seiten von «enigme» kann nachvollzogen werden, was aus dem Traum nach Objektivität und Ordnung in der grössten Stadt des kleinen Landes Schweiz geworden ist. Teilnehmer des Treffens waren:

Polly Bertram, Grafikerin, geboren 1953 in Hamburg, aufgewachsen in der Schweiz. Seit 1981 arbeitet sie zusammen mit Daniel Volkart im eigenen Atelier vor allem für kulturelle Institutionen, politische Organisationen und Alternativbetriebe.

Margit Kast-Lusterberger, geboren 1960 in Leornberg, Deutschland, protokollierte die Diskussion und assistierte Richard Feurer bei seiner Gestaltung. Sie arbeitet als Grafikerin und gründete zusammen mit drei Kollegen 1988 die Designagentur Eclat.

Daniel Zehrer, geboren 1955 in der Schweiz, leitete die Diskussion, redigierte sie, den Text und schrieb die Einleitung. Er ist Mitbegründer der Designagentur Eclat und arbeitet als Berater und Konzepter für Con-

land, led the discussion, edited the text, wrote the introduction. He is co-founder of the Eclat design agency and works as consultant for corporate identity/self-branding. Zurich's two local projects.

ne Grossstadt, doch gross genug, um von einander getrennte Lebenswelten anzubieten. It is by no means self-evident that this design took place. Zurich is no mega city - but still big enough for people to live on their own individual view of life. And that's true even for designers of the same generation. A great deal of time was spent on the discussion: whether it should be conducted and if so, how. In the end, everyone came to a simple conclusion: the links between Viertel Peter Böder, Viertel Daniel Volkart, Viertel Richard, the bottom left quarter for Peter Böder, Viertel Daniel Volkart. In der Mitte stand für jeden eine Doppelseite zur Verfügung. Und in der Mitte stand für jeden eine Doppelseite zur Verfügung.

Daniel Volkart, Grafiker, geboren 1959 in Winterthur. Seit 1981 Partner von Polly im eigenen Atelier.

Rei Fischbacher, visueller Gestalter, geboren 1956 in einer zauberen, friedlichen Kleinstadt des Schweizer Mittellandes. Er arbeitet als freier Grafiker vor allem für alternative Zerstörungsprojekte und in der Plakatgestaltung für kulturelle Institutionen.

Peter Böder, Grafiker, geboren 1957 in Schleitheim. Er arbeitet als freier Grafiker vor allem in der Plakatgestaltung für Konzerte und für Alternativbetriebe und -ver-

lage. Richard Feurer, Grafiker, geboren 1954 in Zürich. Er assistierte seit 1980 im eigenen Atelier und gründete zusammen mit drei Kollegen 1988 die Designagentur Eclat.

Dort arbeiten er für grosse und kleine Projekte des Corporate Design. Seit 1985 arbeitet er mit Macintosh-Systemen. corporate design projects. Since 1985, he

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## Gegen die Konventionen

Daniel Z.: You represent – at least for Europe – young Swiss graphic design. Or, to be precise, young Zurich. Daniel Z.: Ihr repräsentiert – mindestens gegenüber "amrigen" – die junge Schweizer Grafik. Oder genauer: Die junge Zürcher Grafik.

graphic design. What you have in common, it appears, is design that goes against the grain of convention. Das Gemeinsame unter euch, so scheint mir, ist das Gestehen wider die Konvention. Roland: Konventionen zu überwinden ist schon

Roland: It's all very well to kick against conventions, but it's dangerous to see a visual language that is finally gut. Aber: Es ist gefährlich, eine visuelle Sprache zu gebrauchen, die letztendlich nur von einem kleinen Kreis Gleichgesinnter oder gar

only understood by a small circle of likeminded people – or even only by designers themselves. Daniel Z.: If it's nur noch von Gestalter selbst verstanden wird. Daniel Z.: Wenn es gefährlich ist: Warum machst du es dann? Roland: Es gibt

dangerous, why do it? Roland: There are several levels of working in line with conventions. In the same way that verschiedene Ebenen, mit Konventionen zu arbeiten. Wie es auch unterschiedliche Formen gibt, Konventionen zu verweigern oder neue

there are various ways to go against them and pursue a new direction. In visual language, conventions can be Wege einschlagen. Im bildsprachlichen Bereich kann die Konvention im Sinne der Umkehrung, der Satire, der bewussten

approached in a sense of reversal, or satire. Besides that there are large areas of contact border zones – so to Verzeichnung angegangen werden. Daneben gibt es grosse

speak, between conventional design and individual claims. When I say individual deviation from convention

may be dangerous, I don't mean to defend conventions

as an insurmountable prerequisite of language. To me

it's only a matter of questioning the dogma of the

unconventional and the individualistic. A dead-end,

subcultural – or whatever you like to call this visual language – is certainly newer to me personally than a

oder wie auch immer genanntes Bildsprache sicher näher als der visuelle Zirkus des spätkapitalistischen Realismus. Daniel Z.: Was

visual circus of late-capitalist realism. Daniel Z.: So what is fact is visual understanding? Polly: Often the

message of the "normal" poster is completely incomprehensible, but there is a code to the understandable, to einen Code zur Verständlichkeit, zum Intendierten, zum Bild, je sogar zum Ungelesenen, eine allgemeine Glaubwürdigkeit. Roland: Ja,

the illusionary, to the picture, even to the undesigned – a general credibility. Roland: That's right. Wherever one

dort, wo mit Konventionen gearbeitet wird, gibt es diese Überenkunft. Dort funktioniert es. Polly: Scheinbar ja. Deshalb ist es auch

deals with conventions there is this tacit understanding. That's where it functions. Polly: It would seem so.

That's why it's dangerous. And yet – and this is something all of us around this table have in common –

sichtbaren Überenkunft. Das Abbild einer schönen, heilen Naturfandschaft zum Beispiel, die dafür wirbt, für deren Schutz bestimmen

we're all very careful with this apparent understanding. The image of a beautiful intact landscape, for instance, is used to advertise its protection and arouses in you the feeling that you are really there.

Wenn wir ein politisches Plakat machen, geht es um den Umsturz des Establishments. Da steht vor einem Plakat. Whenever we design a political poster, it's a matter of what is actually pointed. The stand in front of a poster that is nothing else but a poster, and that challenges you to act in a certain way. It tells you exactly what is pointed, and nothing more.

hat, das nichts anderes sein will als ein Plakat und das dich zu etwas aufrufen. Es will dich genau das, was

I don't see it. You want to elucidate, I don't. To me it's either a question of being across a significant message, or of being "understood". I don't expect to be understood in the way that I myself understand my visual message.

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# DARUM auch ist für uns de r **TEXT** sehr wichtig und die Typographie

Daniel Z.: Nun, vielleicht mag das eure persönliche Vorliebe sein und ich habe nichts gegen Schrift an sich doch warum kann man dem nicht mittels Bildern entgegenwirken?

Polly: Wei! Bilder so besetzt sind, weil das Lesen von Bildern über bildferne Sprachregelungen abläuft

Roland: Sprache hat einen höheren Wahrheitsanspruch als das Bild sie ist autoritärer jedenfalls gesamtgesellschaftlich betrachtet ... in Bezug auf Gestaltung sehe ich das schon anders

That's why text and typography are very important to us. Daniel Z.: That may be your personal preference - and I have nothing against the verbal as such - but why can't you counteract this by means of images? Polly: Because images are so charged, because the interpretation of images is done through language rules that are alien to the visual. Roland: Written language makes a higher demand for truth than visual language does. It's more authoritarian. Anyhow, viewed from a totally social aspect - in relation to design - I see it differently. Closeness and distance. Daniel Z.: Peter, what's your deeper motivation when you design a concert poster? Peter: There is a fundamental difference for me whether I design a political poster or a concert poster. A concert poster makes hardly any demands. Plus, nobody tells me what to do. With you it's different. You probably have to battle through your concept... but for me it's to design, to deliver and to get it printed. I guess you have all to engage in deep discussions with the client. I don't have to do that. Daniel Z.: But you have clients too who have their own ideas. Can you serve them up whatever you like? Peter: It doesn't mean that I design in a vacuum. My discussion with the client takes place on another level that I find more important. It means, for instance, that when I work for RecRec (an independent record label) I am not designing for just any client who I now and again call on and present my work. For me it's important that I have a close contact with the client. At RecRec I had my workplace in the same room and I was present at many meetings (generally when problems about the business were discussed, not about graphic matters) and I lived together with some of these people. At that time contact with the client was more intensive than it is now. I realize today that I have lost this physical contact and that this also is expressed in my work. Nowadays I get to know the people for whom I work only

## NÄHE und distanz

Daniel Z.: Peter, wenn du nun ein Konzertplakat machst, was ist dann deine tiefere Motivation?

Peter: Für mich ist da ein grundsätzlicher Unterschied, ob ich ein politisches Plakat mache oder ein Konzertplakat. Ein Konzertplakat hat kaum irgendwelche Ansprüche. Zudem redet mir keiner drein. Das ist wohl bei euch anders, ihr müsst vermutlich euer Konzept durchbohren... bei mir wird gemacht, geholt und gedruckt. Ich stelle mir vor, dass ihr euch sehr stark mit dem Kunden auseinander-setzen müsst das muss ich nicht!

Daniel Z.: Aber auch du hast doch Auftraggeber, die ihre eigenen Vorstellungen haben. Kannst Du denen vorsetzen was du willst?

Peter: Das heisst nicht, dass ich im fulleren Raum gestalte. Meine Auseinandersetzung mit dem «Kunden» findet auf einer anderen Ebene statt, die ich eigentlich wichtiger finde. Das heisst z.B., wenn ich für RecRec (alternatives Plattenlabel) arbeite, so gestalte ich nicht für irgend einen Kunden, bei dem ich ab und zu vorbeigehe und meine Ideen oder Arbeiten präsentiere. Für mich ist wichtig, dass ich einen näheren Kontakt zum «Kunden» habe. Bei RecRec hatte ich mein Arbeitsplatz im gleichen Raum, war bei vielen Sitzungen dabei (wo allgemein über die Problem des Betriebs diskutiert wird, nicht nur über grafische Belange) und wohnte mit einigen dieser Leute zusammen. Damals war der Kontakt zum «Kunden» intensiver als heute. Ich merke heute, dass ich diesen körperlichen Kontakt verliere und sich das auch in meinen Arbeiten niederschlägt! Heute ferne ich die Leute, für die ich arbeite, oft erst durch die Zusammenarbeit kennen.

Das ist für mich nicht ganz einfach. Ich finde es ist

wesentlich einfacher und ehrlicher, FreundInnen ein grafisches Aussehen zu geben, als irgendwelchen "fremden" Leuten, die mir womöglich noch unsympathisch sind in grossen Agenturen und mit big Auftraggebern geht das soweit, dass der/die GrafikerIn nicht mal mehr direkt

mit dem Kunden Kontakt hat, sondern dass es für diese Aufgabe eine/n KontakterIn gibt

Peter: Ich sage nicht, die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Kunden sei mir unwichtig. Aber sie wirkt sich nicht wesentlich auf das Resultat aus

Daniel Z.: Reicht dir die Nähe zum Auftraggeber, Peter, um ein Konzertplakat zu machen. Oder brauchst du dafür zuerst ein Konzept?

Roland: Das sehe ich ähnlich. Für mich spielt es keine Rolle wofür Gestaltung steht, ob für das Opernhaus, die Rockmusik, das Gestaltungsmuseum oder Citroën. Viel wichtiger ist es, in welcher Beziehung der/die GestalterIn innerhalb des Prozesses zum Kunden steht. Dort unterscheiden sich jene GestalterInnen, die ein Plakat für eine Rockband erarbeiten, zu deren Musik sie einen eindeutigen Bezug haben, deutlich von jenen, welche nur die Aufgabe haben, die Verkaufszahlen zu erhöhen

Polly: Die kulturelle Differenz zum Kunden wirkt sich oft produktiv aus. Das treibt dich zu etwas an, das du sonst nicht müsstest.

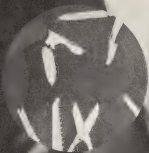
Peter: Also, wie ich Plakate mache. Ich kenne die Musik, blättere Magazine durch, kopiere ein paar Bilder und fange an. Ich überlege mir nicht vorher, was ist das, was sollte eigentlich da drauf. Für ein politisches Plakat würde ich das tun. Ich würde ganz anders drangehen, mir überlegen, was es aussagen sollte etc. ... wahrscheinlich würde ich gar kein politisches Plakat machen. Wenn ich all diese Plakate anschau, da gibt es selten etwas, was mir gefällt, auch von den Linken nicht. Das ist für mich ein Grund, zu sagen, für die würde ich nicht arbeiten. Die interessiert das sowieso nicht, was ich mache, also käme das sowieso nie in Frage. Hier ist es schwierig, Experimente zu machen

## WHEN I ACUTALLY WORK FOR

## them

This is not very easy for me. I find it's basically more simple and honest to do graphic design for people I know than for strangers who would quite likely be unsympathetic to me. In large agencies and with big clients the graphic designer no longer has any direct contact with the client. Somebody is engaged specifically for the job of making the contacts. Richard: The fact that a client comes from practically the same background as I do is not important. What is important is that I am able to think on his/her wavelength and that I can accept what he/she does. It is often much better to gain some distance to understand who he and what she wants - about the same distance a psychoanalyst has from his/her patient. Daniel Z.: Is the nearness to your client sufficient. Or do you need a concept first, when you design a concert poster, Peter? Peter: Well, I do posters this way: I know the music, I leaf through magazines, copy a few pictures - and start. I don't first stop to consider what it is or what should actually be set down. For a political poster I would approach the task in a different way. I would first consider what the message had to be, etc. ... I would probably not do a political poster at all. When I look at all these posters, there is seldom anything that I like - not even those coming from the

left. This is sufficient reason for me not to work for them. They're not interested in what I'm doing anyhow, so it's out of the question. It is difficult to experiment in this field. Roland: I see it the same way. It is unimportant to me what the design is for - whether for the opera house, rock music, the museum of design or Citroën. It's far more important what the relationship is between the designer and the client during the design process. This is the point where those designers who make a poster for a rock band, to whose music they are clearly addicted, differ from those whose task is simply to increase sales figures. Peter: I'm not saying that discussions with the client are unimportant to me. But that they have no significant effect on the end result. Polly: The cultural difference to clients often has a productive effect. It spurs you on to do things you otherwise need not do.



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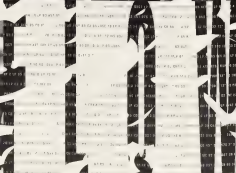
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# GOV







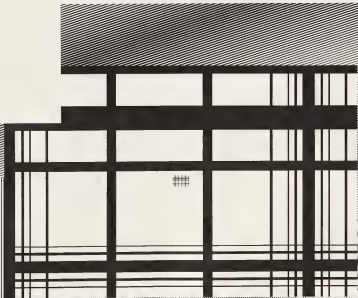


Das »Spiel ohne Ende« zwei Personen, die übereinkom-  
men, ein Spiel zu spielen, das in  
Zunächst ein abstraktes Pro-  
blein: Man vergegenwärtigt sich der Vertauschung von Bejahung  
und Verneinung in allen ihren ge-  
seitigen Kommunikationen

besteht. »Ja« wird zu »nein«, »ich will nicht«, bedeutet »ich will usw. Es handelt sich

also um eine einfache se-  
mantische Übereinkunft, wie  
deren unzählige zwischen al-  
len Menschen bestehen, die  
eine gemeinsame Sprache  
verwenden – mit der einen  
Ausnahme, dass diese Über-

einkunft eine rein private ist. Was leicht zu ihrer ursprünglichen  
allerdings nicht unmittelbar klar Kommunikationsweise zurück-  
ist, ist die Tatsache, dass die kehren können. Im Sinne der  
Spieler, sobald dieses Spiel ein- Spielregel über die Bedeutungs-  
mal begonnen hat, nicht mehr so sumkehrung bedeutet der Vor-



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st der Regel von der Bedeutungsumkehrung unterworfen und daher nutzlos. Der

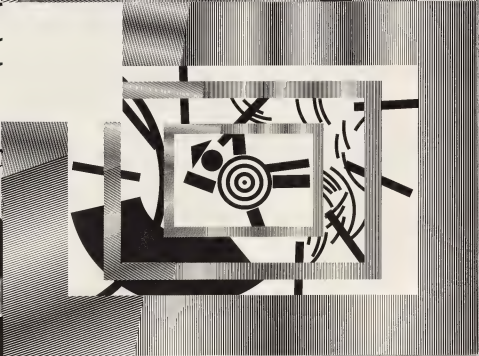
Vorschlag «Hören wir zu spielen auf!» ist unentscheidbar, da er 1) sowohl auf der

Objektstufe (als Teil des Spiels) wie auf der Metastufe (als Bestimmung über das

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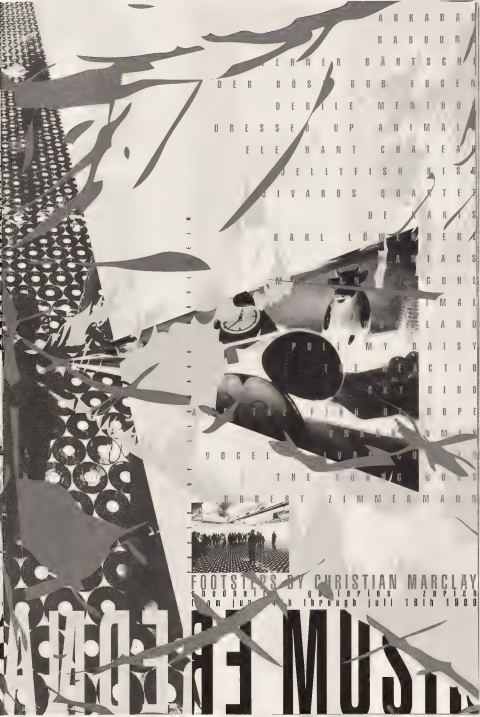












ARKADIS

BABOON

BERNER BÄRTSCH

DER BÜS BUB EUGEN

DEBILE MENTHO

DRESSED UP ANIMAL

ELEHANT CHATEAU

JELLYFISH KISS

IVAROS QUANTE

DE KAKIS

KARL LÖWENHER

ACIACS

GUHL

IMAL

LAND

PULL MY DAISY

THE REACTIO

SEY BIRD

THE FISH OF HOPE

ONAKA COMEY

VOGEL IVAROS

THE YOUNG GODS

ROBERT ZIMMERMAN

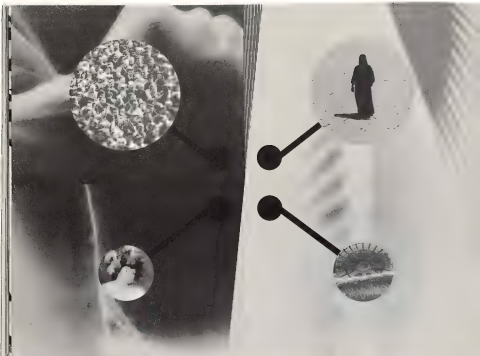


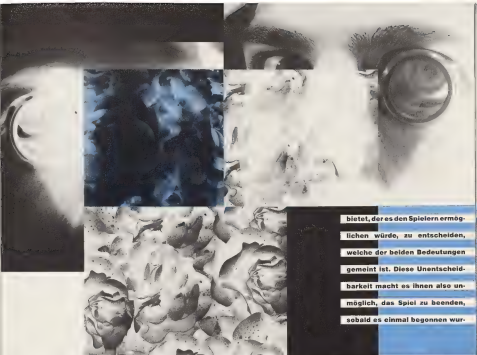
FOOTSTEPS BY CHRISTIAN MARCLAY

SECOND EDITION

FROM JUNE 1988 THROUGH JULY 1989

THE MUST





bietet, der es den Spielern ermög-  
lichen würde, zu entscheiden,  
welche der beiden Bedeutungen  
gemeint ist. Diese Unentscheid-  
barkeit macht es ihnen also un-  
möglich, das Spiel zu beenden,  
sobald es einmal begonnen wur-

sinnvoll ist, 2) die beiden Bedeutungen aber kontradiktorisch sind, und 3) die eigenartige Natur des Spiels keinen Anhaltspunkt

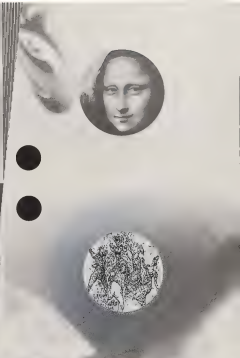
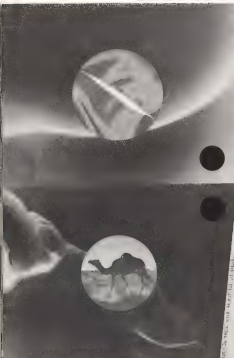




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 CATED AND NEUMAD

Richard: I have worked for a long time for the "Rote Fabrik" in Zurich. I would come to Zurich and I always had the feeling that with my work I was creating a kind of cultural identity for them. But now that you talk to me, you get the idea that you can create a new identity for a company. I was really more important to you. That was more of it only in the past. I find this fascinating.

Richard: It is exactly the same with a commercial design.

Polly: That's the central problem in this process. You get into a situation that you create a new identity.

In good faith - because he's not getting it.

Richard: You become a producer of political cultural content. It's not the same as in the past. It's not the same as in the past. It's not the same as in the past.

Richard: I think that's the central problem in this process. You get into a situation that you create a new identity.

Polly: That's the central problem in this process. You get into a situation that you create a new identity.

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Polly: That's the central problem in this process. You get into a situation that you create a new identity.

## MACHT über den KUNDEN

Richard: Ich habe lange Zeit für die Rote Fabrik gearbeitet. Ich würde immer das Gefühl haben, dass ich mit meiner Arbeit ein kulturelles Identitätsgefühl für sie schaffe. Doch wenn du heute mit mir sprichst, bekommst du den Eindruck, dass man eine neue Identität für ein Unternehmen erschaffen kann. Ich war wirklich wichtiger für sie als heute. Das war mehr von mir als heute. Ich finde das faszinierend.

Richard: Es ist genau das gleiche bei einem kommerziellen Design.

Polly: Das ist das zentrale Problem in diesem Prozess. Man gerät in eine Situation, in der man eine neue Identität für ein Unternehmen erschaffen muss.

In guter Absicht - weil er es nicht versteht.

Richard: Du wirst zum Produzenten von politisch-kulturellem Inhalt. Das ist nicht das gleiche wie früher. Es ist nicht das gleiche wie früher.

Richard: Ich denke, das ist das zentrale Problem in diesem Prozess. Man gerät in eine Situation, in der man eine neue Identität für ein Unternehmen erschaffen muss.

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nicht einleuchtend für ihn als Designer kommen? Daniel V.: Nein, ich habe mich nicht mehr so sehr um ein politisches Bedürfnis bemüht. Daniel Z.: Eine Aufgabe, die zu lösen, was deiner Meinung zu ihm passt, oder was, was einen antagonistischen Theorien antwortet?

Polly: Das, was ihm hilft, was auch Wolfgang Deiters ist. ... was auch ein Stück Prozess ist, der nicht von der anderen ist, sondern aus der Auseinandersetzung mit diesem Kunden. Das finde ich sehr wichtig. Darauf könnte ich nicht verzichten. Sonst mache ich selbst gar kein Design.

Richard: Man oder hat man ja gegenwärtig kulturelle Theorien haben, mit denen alle etwas anfangen, was eine Aufgabe richtig gemacht wird. Für mich ist das schwierig. Ich stelle fest, dass es um einen Prozess geht, das kann ich nicht ablehnen. Pluralität.

Doch es gibt auch etwas Gemeinsames. Bei allen, auch bei mir, ist sehr stark das Subjektive, der eigene Geschmack oder die eigene Lust, um ein gewisses kulturelles Identitätsgefühl, was ich als Designer empfinde.

Ich habe viele der Sachen gemacht, was das Mittelchen überlassen bleibt. Ich habe viele der Sachen gemacht, was das Mittelchen überlassen bleibt. Ich habe viele der Sachen gemacht, was das Mittelchen überlassen bleibt.

Daniel Z.: Das ist ein sehr stark gesellschaftlich-ethisches Auftrag, was auch von der gesellschaftlichen Tradition der Schweizer Grafik herkommt. Sie geht davon aus, dass es etwas wie eine objektive Gestaltung gibt. Es ist nicht so, wie man es heute sieht. Es ist nicht so, wie man es heute sieht.

Daniel V.: Ich finde es sehr wichtig, dass man sich für die Identität eines Unternehmens interessiert. Es ist nicht so, wie man es heute sieht. Es ist nicht so, wie man es heute sieht.

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Richard: Ich habe lange Zeit für die Rote Fabrik gearbeitet. Ich würde immer das Gefühl haben, dass ich mit meiner Arbeit ein kulturelles Identitätsgefühl für sie schaffe. Doch wenn du heute mit mir sprichst, bekommst du den Eindruck, dass man eine neue Identität für ein Unternehmen erschaffen kann. Ich war wirklich wichtiger für sie als heute. Das war mehr von mir als heute. Ich finde das faszinierend.

Richard: Es ist genau das gleiche bei einem kommerziellen Design.

Polly: Das ist das zentrale Problem in diesem Prozess. Man gerät in eine Situation, in der man eine neue Identität für ein Unternehmen erschaffen muss.

In guter Absicht - weil er es nicht versteht.

Richard: Du wirst zum Produzenten von politisch-kulturellem Inhalt. Das ist nicht das gleiche wie früher. Es ist nicht das gleiche wie früher.

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## THE exclusivity OF THE avantgarde

Daniel Z.: I have some difficulty in making the dividing line between the commercial and the avant-garde. I think it's very important that you get into a situation that you create a new identity.

In good faith - because he's not getting it.

Richard: You become a producer of political cultural content. It's not the same as in the past. It's not the same as in the past.

Richard: I think that's the central problem in this process. You get into a situation that you create a new identity.

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## exklusivität der AVANTGARDE

Daniel Z.: Bei der klaren Grenzsetzung zwischen dem kommerziellen und dem künstlerischen Design ist es sehr wichtig, dass man sich für die Identität eines Unternehmens interessiert. Es ist nicht so, wie man es heute sieht. Es ist nicht so, wie man es heute sieht.

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Schritt über den eigenen Gartenzimmer hinaus. Polly: Es ist sehr wichtig, dass man sich für die Identität eines Unternehmens interessiert. Es ist nicht so, wie man es heute sieht. Es ist nicht so, wie man es heute sieht.

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and the same to me. I don't want to become an image producer for language advertising. I think it's very important that you get into a situation that you create a new identity.

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## THE CLIENTS



gives you the feeling that everything is fine, that everything is in perfect order. But that's not true.

**DANIEL:** We're trying to find new principles of order, another kind of order than the one Emil Ruder found.

**EMIGRE:** Are you influenced by him or anybody in particular?

**DANIEL:** ...

**POLLY:** ...

**EMIGRE:** There are no influences?

**POLLY:** Not directly. Years later, we realized that there must have been, but still ...

**EMIGRE:** You don't have to narrow it down to graphic designers. There must be things that have inspired you.

**POLLY:** One thing maybe. In the eighties there was the beginning of a need to be much wilder and richer. There was war in towns. It was like Paris in the sixties. Youth uprising.

**EMIGRE:** Uprising against what? What is there to be unhappy about in Switzerland?

**POLLY:** Zurich desperately needed some cultural centers for young people. Young people were very unhappy with their living situations. It's extremely expensive and very boring to live here, and it's hard for young people to find affordable places to live.

**DANIEL:** It can be a serious problem to find an apartment. That's one of the biggest problems here today. Prices are getting higher and higher. For the first time we're seeing people living in the streets in Zurich! I know that you're used to this in the United States, but this is new for us.

**EMIGRE:** This situation has influenced your ideologies?

**DANIEL:** Yes. However, in terms of influences from the visual world, I would say that we have affinities with Dadaism and Russian Constructivism.

**POLLY:** Although we found out about these affinities only recently.

**EMIGRE:** But have they influenced you?

**POLLY:** No, not really. We found out that we sometimes use the same tricks and elements as they did. But we'll never know if we actually came to the same conclusions by mistake or whether we actually copied them. One of our alms has always been to put other pictures in the streets, new pictures each time, because we don't like the pictures we have to look at. It's as simple as that.

**DANIEL:** We're also looking for a cultural identity in this city.

**EMIGRE:** Do you feel that these recent posters reflect your current design philosophy better than the early ones? The recent posters have become much more complex. Has your approach become more complex?

**POLLY:** No, it's the effect of learning. It doesn't mean they're better or worse than the earlier ones.

**EMIGRE:** Do you still like the early posters (Opposite page)?

**DANIEL:** Yes, I still like them because they are simple, and maybe because they looked more peculiar in their surroundings than the recent series.

**EMIGRE:** The early ones just tell one story, very straightforward, whereas the recent posters seem to be more diverse, with more room for interpretation.

**POLLY:** But that's also a problem for us. It has to do with our difficulty in saying things in a straightforward way today.

**EMIGRE:** It was not your intention to leave room for interpretation?

**DANIEL:** No, because it results in misunderstandings. Young people tend to like our work very much because, they say, it is so personal, so emotional. But we don't like this.

**POLLY:** It is very strange, but it is not possible to say things in a simple way anymore.

**EMIGRE:** Why not?



Die Oper vom grossen Hirschgarten



**POLLY:** It's the Zeitgeist. There aren't any simple solutions anymore.

**EMIGRE:** *You sound bothered.*

**POLLY:** Well, it's difficult, because you end up solving problems in very formal ways. It's about design, and the message often gets obscured.

**DANIEL:** I want to be clear in our messages.

**EMIGRE:** *And you don't think you are?*

**DANIEL:** I think I am, but the messages are often very complex.

**EMIGRE:** *I enjoy these layered messages, though.*

**DANIEL:** You are also a man of this time. Maybe it's not much different in the United States.

**EMIGRE:** *Do you think that what you are doing is significant?*

**POLLY:** Significant for what?

**EMIGRE:** *Swiss culture.*

**POLLY:** Yes.

**EMIGRE:** *What makes it significant? What makes one poster any different from the next poster? What makes your posters different from Weingart's posters?*

**POLLY:** Well, that you can see, they're completely different!

**EMIGRE:** *Yes, but try to explain it.*

**POLLY:** It's a completely different approach.

**DANIEL:** We work within an entirely different ideology.

**EMIGRE:** *What is the ideology?*

**POLLY:** It's a different time, a different Zeitgeist, than Weingart's.

**EMIGRE:** *But when you look at the thousands of posters that have been produced in the past 50 years, how do your posters stand apart from the rest? I'm asking you this question because there are a lot of established, older designers who complain that nothing new is being produced, that young designers are just reinventing the wheel, that it's all been done before. Are they right?*

**DANIEL:** Yes, it's possible.

**POLLY:** But our posters are different. The paper, the minimal use of colors, the use of typography. The art of using photographs as documentation and not necessarily as publicity. One important thing is that we don't want people to see a poster of ours as a cutout of some imaginary reality but as paper with color on it. And that's not just a technical approach; it's also a cultural statement. Because within our culture almost anything visual has to function as a cutout of some kind of reality. It's

always a window. We never wanted to make windows. We wanted to make posters.

**EMIGRE:** *What do you think about Weingart's work? Do you think it is significant?*

**DANIEL:** Designers such as Weingart invent dogmas for new ways to design and these dogmas never change. His work can be seen as significant, it always was, but it never changed. It will always be right according to the dogmas. In terms of exactness and typographical organisation, this type of design won't lose its power. It will always be right. We're intrigued by this notion, but it's not our main interest. Printed pieces on paper are transitory objects, which means change and invention. Our work is a kind of fight against this clear, clean, rational Swiss design.

**POLLY:** But it's not a fight for ourselves only; it's a fight for a necessary renewal of a cultural identity.

**EMIGRE:** *Don't you think that is what Emil Ruder and Armin Hofmann were fighting for, too?*

**POLLY:** Yes, but they fixed the truth and that's not very creative. That doesn't go forward. So yes, for Switzerland, but especially for Zurich. I think we do very important work.



**EMIGRE:** What is your involvement in the *Boymans - van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam?*

**HAMISH MUIR (8vo):** We have in the past year designed just about all the exhibition catalogs and posters for them.

**EMIGRE:** It's curious to see that Wim Crowel, the director at the *Boymans - van Beuningen*, goes to England to hook up with 8vo. Did he have to go all the way to England to find designers that can still design according to his aesthetic?

**HAMISH:** We were in contact with him through our magazine Octavo. He contributed an article to issue number 5. Along the way he asked us what else we did and he was quite surprised to find out that we also ran an office. Eventually we had a meeting with him and showed our work. I think he wanted something that wasn't particularly Dutch design as we know it today. But I won't say anymore than that. One can see that he takes a slightly different standpoint from some of the other well-known Dutch designers. I think what he felt he could get from us was a varied approach. He could see in Octavo that we changed the way we designed each issue based on the content. I think he understood that we could probably come to grips with the different sorts of content matter of the various exhibition catalogs and express ourselves without overpowering the art.

**EMIGRE:** Wim Crowel is a very distinguished graphic designer in his own right with very outspoken ideas about graphic design. How is he as a client?

**HAMISH:** In the beginning he would let us work for a while and wanted to see what we'd come up with. Whenever he felt he had to comment he would. But usually the comments we receive are about typographic detail. It's been quite an eye-opener for us to be working with him. We have always greatly admired his work.

**EMIGRE:** There is so much graphic design talent in Holland that for Wim Crowel to go to England to get a design team to work for this very prestigious Dutch museum, must have been somewhat of an eye-opener for a few Dutch designers as well. Have you noticed any

bad feelings?

**HAMISH:** The great thing is, because we're here on the other side of the Channel, we're not aware of any bad feelings. If there are any at all. We're aware of the kind of opportunity and responsibility that we have, but I really think it's a geographical accident that we're in England. I think it's entirely in line with the phrase that's on everybody's lips right now, which is a planned United Europe in 1992.

**EMIGRE:** You consider yourself an exponent of this ideal?

**HAMISH:** One has to be. We're trying to get more and more work in Europe. We feel very European.

**EMIGRE:** You're the first European that I've heard say this.

**HAMISH:** Really? I think the concept is fantastic. Culturally England can finally become part of Europe.

**EMIGRE:** Will this influence British design?

**HAMISH:** Purely from my own point of view, I think that the English contribution, especially to the field of graphic design and typography, has not been a very marvelous one anyway. There are lots of people who would dispute that, who like English design and respect and admire it for what it's done. However, I think it has only played an important role in the last twenty years in the development of graphic design as a professional big business, more so than in any creative sense.

**EMIGRE:** Don't you think that what the British record industry has done in terms of design has influenced graphic design all over the world?



Wim Crowel (Eds)

**EMIGRE:** Why did you decide to start Octavo? Was it more than just an attempt to further emphasize your interest and excitement regarding the international style?

**HAMISH:** It was 1976 when we started thinking about Octavo and at the time typography in England was nothing. Nobody took type seriously. To us good typography is very important. We don't call ourselves typographers; we're graphic designers who use type a lot. Type affects the starting point and type is the all-important element. We felt nobody was saying anything about typography. As different reasons, we all got very enthusiastic about the idea of publishing a magazine on typography. When we started we weren't all that clear about how to do this. At one time we felt that there were going to be only eight issues and they would always be the same format and then it would use only one type family throughout.

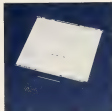
**EMIGRE:** But would the magazine always feature designers who work in the same genre as you?

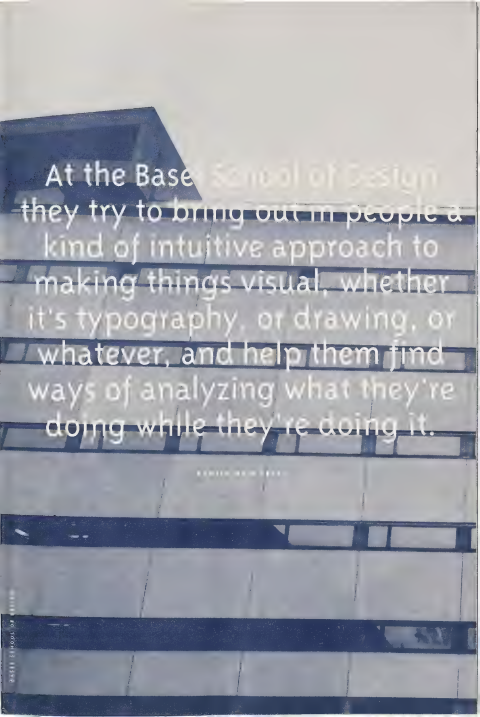
**HAMISH:** No, not necessarily. Obviously we started to include what we felt was interesting and that we could understand, but the magazine has, in the past, also included things that are not directly related to graphic design, like art and poetry.

**EMIGRE:** What are you going to do after the final issue is published?

**HAMISH:** We'll have a lot and catch up on some moments at home. We have a lot for the future. We're looking on the day of publishing.

Hamish Muir (Eds) for Wim Crowel's Dutch Museum exhibition.





At the Basel School of Design they try to bring out in people a kind of intuitive approach to making things visual, whether it's typography, or drawing, or whatever, and help them find ways of analyzing what they're doing while they're doing it.

—KARIN KOSCHKE

**HAMISH:** I tend to agree with that, but the trouble is that a lot of people who get involved in the record industry tend to do just that kind of work all the time. I don't think that one can say there are many real designers designing record sleeves in England, although a lot of the people who have done record work have gone on to do other things and have been influential.

**EMIGRE:** In my opinion, Swiss design has progressed in the areas of typography and use of image, but very little innovation is visible in the use of typefaces. Why do you think this is?

**HAMISH:** To me, when you look at any page or poster, you can imagine all the millions of millions, like an imaginary grid. Sometimes for me some sort of type works perfectly on the grid. It seems I get on the way. It's almost instinctive. You can do almost anything with it because the forms are so strong. We always say that it's not the typeface, it's what you do with it that's important. I am quite proud of being able to remember in terms of typefaces. I'd be happy to work with Helvetica for the rest of my life. However, in the past few years we have felt a lack in the range of forms available. We started using Helvetica Grotius and then we started using typefaces. Because it's not a range of forms including rounded and serifed and rounded serifed versions, we started on my first three in the past year and had great fun with them. One of them to do with doing enough to feel that you can progress on to something a bit more varied. In six years I might actually be using entirely different typefaces.

information design and the record sleeve look like something expressive. A lot of designers only produce record sleeves and if you ask them to actually design a bus timetable, they find it either uninteresting or are actually incapable of doing it.

**EMIGRE:** You studied in Basel, Switzerland for one year. Did Basel instill this idea of graphic design as a problem-solving discipline?

**HAMISH:** I don't really draw a distinction between design as problem-solving and design as making interesting things, because I think it is the same thing. And I don't think they teach problem-solving in Basel. They try to bring out in people a kind of intuitive approach to making things visual, whether it's typography, or drawing, or whatever, and help them find ways of analyzing what they're doing while they're doing it.

**EMIGRE:** Where did you study before Basel?

**HAMISH:** I studied graphic design at the Bath Academy of Art. And I can say, with my hand on my heart, that I learned very little about graphic design, but a lot about the thinking process and how to come to terms with learning to be confident and to trust one's intuitive processes as well as learning how to apply that intuition. In reality, the head of the department, Benno Zehnder, was Swiss, and by talking to him and other people I had created an incredibly romantic view of Swiss design. At the time I expressed a loathing of everything that was current in English design. This was long before typography became big. During the past six or so years in England, typography has become quite popular. It's replaced other areas of graphic design as being the thing that most people want to study. However, typography during the time I was studying at Bath was something nobody dealt with. It was the stuff at the bottom of the poster, it was afterthought. Imagery and ideas were much more important. Graphic design in the seventies was often very slick and witty and clever.

And I was never particularly comfortable coming up with so-called big ideas. So Benno suggested I should think about going to the post-graduate program in Basel.

**EMIGRE:** This is an interesting distinction that I run into every time I go back to Europe, this idea of "real" designers. As opposed to what? Fake designers? Maybe you can elaborate.

**HAMISH:** In the past ten years, England has been plagued by what has been labeled as the "Designer Decade." Everything had a designer label attached to it. There was a proliferation of matte black gadget shops. People became very aware of design. There were TV programs about graphic design and the annual design awards were on the BBC. But a lot of the work we see is not really graphic design. It's more like painting with design, or drawing with design. Some of it is interesting and refreshing, but I don't feel that it comes from people who have a design sense. They're not, to use the cliché, problem-solving. They make decoration. That kind of design is going to change every three or four years. I don't feel that the work being produced under that kind of banner has got any theoretical or fundamental basis to it. It's very superficial. For me, a graphic designer is someone who can do a record sleeve one day and a bus timetable the next and make the bus timetable look like a piece of

it took me a year to get the money together for Basel and then, in the end, I actually got a scholarship. I went to Switzerland and stayed for a year.

**EMIGRE:** Did Switzerland live up to your expectations?

**HAMISH:** Yes and no. The first disappointment was that it wasn't Germany. The graffiti on the street was only marginal, y'know, better than in England. Also, I was expecting this amazing theatrical, hand-drawn atmosphere, but it turned out to be like we were apprentices to some great master painter. I felt we were outside because I wasn't willing to enter into the great heritage of the masters. It's a particularly English attitude to think, because we have conformed ourselves, did get a bit of it. We did a lot of great exercises. We learned to make about seeing things and shape and form. We got these very simple assignments. One was to make a black and white version of, say, an oak leaf. Not in order to replicate it, but to work up our hands to be able to speak, which was a great exercise to go through. Benno taught, the man who taught those classes, was amazing. He taught us how to do things very slowly, so that I could see what he was doing in a real, simple way, which hopefully will communicate with a lot of people, you know. The trouble is that many students took more exercise too literally. After school they would start producing graphic design with leaves in it. Most of the stuff that people do in Basel is related to exercises and is related to process from which you can learn. And you're supposed to use that knowledge in several ways. But too many designers who studied at Basel did not really understand what it was about and ended up producing objects, exercises, or their professional work, and you can't blame it on Basel. At Basel they said, "We're not going to design a record sleeve, because you can do that later. We're going to teach you something, and in order to teach you something, we have to make the exercise really simple, so that within the space of three months we can all actually learn something." I don't think it was ever meant to be taken at face value. And I think the same can be said of Benjamin's class. In his heyday, during the sixties and early seventies, when Wolfgang was developing his film motion technique, it obviously fed back into the class and people worked in three ways and there were some really good things produced. But that type of experimental work is like an amazingly good wine, which doesn't travel very well. To take it out of the environment in which it was made, which was the training in Europe, and try to bring it to everybody else, it may do it that way. I think it totally wins.

**EMIGRE:** After Basel did you immediately start that Red had been there on ideas to start a company with Simon Johnson and Mark Holt using the principles of Swiss design?

**HAMISH:** I don't really happen like that. When I returned to London I was very aware of what graphic design was and of the fact that there was a great gap between the two. But eventually I met Simon, who had been in Basel the year after I was there, and Simon had met Mark, who had spent some time in San Francisco. After various meetings the three of us formed Red. But the intention was never to produce books or design. Actually, by the time we started Red I had gotten over the strong influence of Swiss design. Also, Mark had a very individual approach, which was a reaction to San Francisco. He knew more what he didn't want to do than what he did want to do. The same was true for me. We both knew what kinds of work we did not do. There were a few ground rules at all, but we did not under

**EMIGRE:** How would I label your work as Swiss? Do you say that it has evolved out of what is referred to as Swiss design or typography?

**HAMISH:** I suppose that some of the things we have done, some of the tricks of manipulating type for instance, were obviously influenced by Swiss design. But I wouldn't say that we were working in it or using it. We like to refer to it as the "International Style." That's a lot of confusion concerning these two labels. But to me, Swiss design or typography refers to a lot of important developments that the so-called posterists like van Doesburg, etc. were involved in, some of which was obviously amazing and very advanced. But other than in England, when people talk about Swiss design, they refer to the three crucial guys and the Swiss-point design, a type of design which is often heavy and academic. When it comes to design and was replaced by photography in the late fifties and early sixties. I had become a bit naive for people to do typography and some designers felt there had to be some ground rules. People like Benno Zehnder, who was an amazing theoretician, and who had a lot of influence on designers, supplied some of the rules. He was a very clever tactician. But the rules that were laid out were too often



**EMIGRE:** Let me go on to an article about *Svo* that was written by Hugh Aldersey-Williams for *ID* (Magazine of International Design, March/April 1989). He quoted you as saying that "Modernism is the truth. Modernism is the thing that is right, and everything else is wrong." A lot of people think Modernism reduced or fixed the truth, and that's why it became sterile and boring.

**HAMISH:** It was a while ago that I said that, although I would still say that today. But it was slightly English in the sense that it wasn't meant entirely seriously. I was formulating a very strong feeling that there is a lot of crap around. Stuff without a foundation. We found that the only way to actually produce good work is by having almost a tunnel vision and by committing ourselves to rejecting a lot of bad influences. This is both good and bad. It's bad because you don't allow yourself to be open to influences that might be beneficial. But Modernism, or the International Style, never really achieved what it could have achieved.

**EMIGRE:** Could that be attributed to the fact that it speaks only one language? This is a recurring criticism of Swiss design and the International Style. It only speaks one language, and to apply this one language to different jobs is wrong. People argue that a dominating style defeats the purpose of graphic design, which is to impart a specific character to a job.

**HAMISH:** You don't want one dominating style, because who wants everything to look the same? But at the same time, there is such a lot of garbage around that is too often explained as being "interesting," so it must be good. I have a problem with that, because I think it has to be good to be "interesting." Now "good" is a very subjective term. It all comes down to what you believe in and what your approach is. Pluralism is great, it means that there is a chance for everybody to do something. However, the reality is that designers continuously rip things off without understanding the meaning of certain designs. You always see designs taken out of context and reapplied for totally wrong reasons.

**EMIGRE:** This is what happened to Neville Brody. And since his work was being ripped off by everybody and his brother, he decided to design *Arena* magazine in such a way that nobody would want to copy him. He started using *Helvetica* and sort of laid low. But don't you feel that's a poor rule to design by?

**HAMISH:** Maybe, but I can understand it. It was distracting to see people lifting something that was so personal, which was born out of a particular set of jobs that he was working on. He created his own style and people took it and applied it willy-nilly just to make money, just because they couldn't think of anything original themselves. But let's go back to what is real design and what is not. What's valid are things that actually develop. If you are heavily influenced by, but understand, the position of the work that has come before by designers living and dead, then you are not ripping it off, but building on it. You go to it in the first place because you are attracted to it, because it strikes a sympathetic chord. It helps you think about the way you want to approach graphic design. Then you develop your own language, based on that foundation. That's how culture progresses. This type of design will have substance no matter how wacky it is, or how wild it looks. You can tell work that is produced by people with commitment, who do it because they have to do it, because it's part of them and you'll be able to tell that it's sincere, rather than of the moment.

**EMIGRE:** Has anybody ever said that all you work looks alike?

**HAMISH:** Occasionally people have said that, but not anyone. Because our work has certainly been several miles away. In the past year we have actually kept all people by using typewriters and others we never used before, and people have stopped seeing that all our work looks the same. During the last four years we were doing the ground to do. Now we're breaking our own rules, but we had to have those rules to start with. It's a building process. We still want to be producing graphic design twenty years from now. And I can't imagine what our work will look like then, but I hope it will be totally wild and crazy. We just don't want to do everything all at once.

**EMIGRE:** Why do you think people get bored with Swiss design and the entire idea that form follows function in the early eighties, and are you not worried that history might repeat itself?

**HAMISH:** I guess they saw that they can do something they thought was more interesting to them and other people. Why should anybody continue to work in the same way anyway? But I have a feeling I will never get bored with the type of design we involve ourselves in at five. I was attracted by the clean and simple model. I thought it was the best way to do things that were totally wild and crazy, which is what I want to eventually be doing. I am not bored by the clean. I always there to begin and center and create the possibilities. The reaction to Swiss design and form follows function resulted in a lot of very interesting and complex designs, but to me a lot of it looks the same. It's all very one-dimensional and any design is an display of depth and the roles and complex roles. And the way things are manipulated are so predictable in a way, and I find that boring. In a sense, what started out as a reaction has actually become a norm. A lot of the reactions to Swiss design have been very positive and good, but throwing everything away and retaining nothing, perhaps not the best way to approach change.



**EMIGRE:** When I wrote you my letter explaining that I was planning an issue about young Swiss designers, you wrote back saying you were wondering what I would write about, because you feel that there's not much new or exciting work being done in Switzerland at the moment.

**WOLFGANG WEINGART:** I said you don't have to come to

Switzerland to see imitations. You have plenty of designers in the United States who can design like some of the Swiss "punks" whom you picked for this issue.

**EMIGRE:** I could not help but admire these young Swiss designers. To do this type of work, for some rather large companies, in a country that has a graphic design tradition that

is based on a clean, structured and rational approach, I thought was quite amazing. I wondered what had happened to their cultural heritage? I see nothing Swiss. They stated that they don't consider themselves a product of Switzerland per se, but as a product of a culturally and visually complex world in which they have to find their own place, their own direction. This is how they justify their erratic and often changing work. And perhaps this work might look very much like work that's now also being produced in the United States, Holland, or England. It's a modern phenomenon that more and more, people are experiencing the entire world and not just their own city or country.

**WEINGART:** Yes, that's apparent everywhere. Now, in Middle Europe we eat the same "nouvelle cuisine" as they do in France. There is no typical food here anymore. And that's a shame, because food used to be very good here. We used to have very nice, simple food. Now they serve you these big plates with a bit of food here and a bit there. It's true for anything. Look at fashion. Designers go to Africa and come back with new ideas they copy from primitive tribes. They are big successes and become millionaires.

**EMIGRE:** What do you think about this loss of cultural identity?

**WEINGART:** I think nothing about it. I don't care. I never cared about nationalism. To me "Swiss" design, or the so-called "Swiss Typography," such as Emil Ruder's work, was never typically Swiss either. It all happened by accident. Sure, it is Swiss in the sense that it is clean and clear, but the Germans are very much like the Swiss people: very strict, clean and disciplined, and yet they design very differently. After Ruder left Basel, it came here purely by accident. My ideas were totally different from Ruder's. They were somewhat parallel, but I continued where Ruder had reached a dead end. Swiss Typography was not too exciting, it was almost repetitious. There was a need for something new, a new impact, and I happened to be around at that time, which is now some twenty years ago. These happenings were all accidental and had nothing to do with Switzerland directly. They had perhaps something to do with the Swiss educational system. Here, it was possible for every professional to teach. In Germany you need a certificate from a higher school of education and pedagogic training. Here they hired you straight off the street, although it's not as easy here anymore

either

**EMIGRE:** But your ways of teaching and your work, which was partially a reaction against Ruder's dogma, were not entirely an "accident."

**WEINGART:** I was an accident that I happened to be in Basel. The important designers, Holzmeier and Ruder, were in my class. My class were paid, to them. Ruder's students were very much the same as mine, only some were much more complex and open. Ruder accepted that he acknowledged that there were new possibilities, and he acknowledged that the program was not perfect. It was conservative and then it changed a new strategy. It created the possibility of building a new house. The idea is very new and different. The students loved it, and therefore Ruder supported me every time, but many other colleagues and other designers in Switzerland were totally against what we were doing. They laughed at us. And look at them now.

**EMIGRE:** Last time I talked to you, in California, you said you were tired of having to do the same interview time after time and of continually seeing the same Basel work reproduced in design annuals. You felt that you've said everything there is to say because you didn't do much design in the past years. Did you get bored with graphic design?

**WEINGART:** You have different needs from decade to decade. In the past five years, I've become more interested and have gotten more involved in teaching. My report to the students, and I can't move about the quality of their work than my own. The energy that is necessary to keep [if people] excited is quite draining. And teaching is getting so much more complex, too, especially since the computer was introduced. I brought computers into the school, the first school in Switzerland to use them. This required a lot of preparing and relearning of the curriculum. Besides teaching, I am lecture, and I still like me about ten to twelve weeks to prepare the special themes for my lectures, and then I'm involved in giving a few seminars and public lectures there, which also require a lot of organizing. But to come back to your question, it is not that I'm bored with design, it's just that all the years are over. It's such beautiful work. They design beautiful posters in Japan of which I'm very jealous. His don't need to do other designs anymore. Because it is all over now.

**EMIGRE:** We can't just stop. We'll always want to explore the new and unfamiliar, that's human nature.

**WEINGART:** Well, we are exploring, especially with the computer, we are finding out new possibilities, new ways to communicate. This will be the next experience, but now we're still exploring.

**EMIGRE:** You have been teaching for over twenty years, educating young designers, but you say that there is nothing interesting going on in Switzerland. As an educator you've had a great opportunity to do something about this.

**WEINGART:** There nothing to do in this problem. The reason there are a lot of good young designers in Switzerland is not very fault. Many of my students are designers. They come to Basel in their mind when they finish. They leave and return to their own countries. Switzerland is a learning society. To start your career as a designer, Swiss citizens are advised again to new ideas. There is only a handful of people in Switzerland who have somewhat succeeded in breaking out of this conservative climate, people such as Olmsted & Tschumi (Jean Robert). But the designers that you have picked, of course, are since by the type of design, you will give your students in Germany the impression that this is work that is being produced in Germany. What you want to show your students is exciting work that is new only there. You want to show them that will mean people believe that they are doing [exciting work in Switzerland], work that

continues in the Swiss tradition of design.

**EMIGRE:** That is what we'd like to do, but we consciously decided not to show the work of Olmsted & Tschumi or your work or Armin Hofmann's, because that's the type of work Swiss design has been associated with for the past twenty or thirty years. We thought it would be interesting to find out if Swiss design had progressed, and hopefully show some new



work. I mean, all these designers that you mention, including yourself, have all been teaching at working for so long. Where are the results? What happened to this progression, this "house" that was being built?

**WEINBERG:** Well, in a way things have stopped progressing, although you may find out differently when our typography book about my career is finally published. Emil Ruder stopped a long time ago. Recently, I have stopped my typographic experimentation because an involving myself in other things, such as teaching. But at school, in fact, we follow typographic rules less and less. We have some very elementary rules, which I think you need, but in general we're very, very open. We have certain formations, if it becomes clear without sense, if we just stick stuff together and print it, that's wrong. That's what I see. In the work of some of the designers you referred to for this issue, sometimes there seems to be no rules. It's like painting. It's just to do that, once, but you see the problem? **EMER:** But we're looking at a mess here (laughs). IT CAN BE A PAINFUL. We're not talking about a signage system for the highway.

**WEINBERG:** Actually, I'd like to see these young designers do that sometimes, too. In certain they do a great job.

**EMER:** Some of the designers in this issue also do some very functional work. RUDER, for instance, has worked for the Swiss telephone company. They design instruction booklets, very rational. "Twice-looking" graphic design, which they do very well. But I feel anybody can do that. Anybody who graduates from Basel can do this. It's when they're experienced, when they are exploring, that their work is very strong.

**WEINBERG:** You're right, but nevertheless, I'm very skeptical. I like a pyrexia, unfortunately, the end result is jagged, it's unclear. For me it's a formalistic problem. Everything I consider must be clear. I can show you crazy, chaotic things, and twenty years ago, but I cannot repeat them. I come back to very simple and clear work, do **EMER:** ... Emil Ruder's.

**WEINBERG:** In fact, Ruder didn't integrate elements, he put a hole of type here, and a hole of type there, with lots of white space. He didn't modularize the page. That's my opinion of Ruder. He just modularized the page. He was a much better typographer.

But what is this book about?

**EMER:** There are struggles to ensure the computer, in itself a valuable thing to do, because the computer will eventually make design more affordable. And I know it's more about the computer than about the actual solving of a communications problem, but that's the pole we have to pay for a little while.

**WEINBERG:** I can say that it gets more tedious, but I am against, or better, suspicious of, designers or groups of designers who change their face from one day to the next. There was a. Today we do April Dornier, tomorrow we do Stefan Dornier. I am very much in favor of developing time.

**EMER:** I'm not in favor of copying, but don't you think it's an advantage for a designer to be able to work almost as a chemist? Designers work for different clients. The design should not be about the designer. The design should be about the client. Therefore, it's good to be able to work in different ways. This is applied art, not fine art.

**WEINBERG:** Yes, but the designer who will not, after a while where it's not appropriate. This makes me sense, it's a repeat vocabulary. It's like learning a tool in your head and repeating it, as an artist.

I'll guarantee that these Swiss new players won't show any of their work in twenty years. Because they will realize they did dumb things these days. These people are a result of copying other people's work. Whether it's good or bad is not the question. Their vocabulary is a pure business person adaptation of no thing styles. This is my criterion of so many designs that I see today, but not with April Dornier. My criticism of her is that she just uses to copy herself. I don't believe that she can create a new vocabulary for a new work, but now she repeats and repeats and repeats here!

**EMER:** People might say that about you, too.

**WEINBERG:** That's the reason why I stopped.

**EMER:** That should be a reason to go on.

**WEINBERG:** No... Bad to stop, in order to let the things that produced a life in, and wait until the next, real explosion comes, so that designers in the new decade can copy me again.

**EMER:** The real explosion? Where will it come from?

**WEINBERG:** From myself. I am waiting for the next explosion. It will happen.



Michael Haver  
Design for the Department of Education



Michael Haver  
Department of the State  
the education

**EMIGRE:** Most people know that you studied in Basel, but I'm curious why you went there in the first place. Could you tell me a bit about this?

**APRIL GREIMAN:** That's a very simple answer. I got my bachelor degree in graphic design at the Kansas City Art Institute. At that time, there were three instructors from the Basel school teaching in Kansas City, so I spent two years under that kind of instruction. These three instructors were Inge Druckrey, who went on to teach at Philadelphia College of Art and later Yale; Hans Allemann, who also taught at Philadelphia

College of Art (he was chairman of the program there for a few years); and Ciri Zelnitsky. The three of them were very interesting creatures. Inge is

German, Hans is Swiss, and Ciri Zelnitsky is Russian. These three people landed in Kansas City, and I never found out how that happened. Unfortunately, in my senior year the three had to leave

because their visas were up. So in my senior year I nearly dropped out of graphic design, because the quality of instruction was not up to what we were getting from these Basel satellite people. Thus, I

was more or less majoring in ceramics, although I did in the end get my degree in graphic design. Just slightly before my graduation from Kansas City, Armin Hofmann came through town.

He had an exhibition of his work. I met him and asked what it would take to go to the Basel school and he said, "Just show up in September."

**EMIGRE:** Did you show him your work?

**APRIL:** A little bit, yes. But I got his typical answer. He looked at my work and said, "Ja ja, ja ja." However, much to his surprise, I showed up in September at the administrative office at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Basel, and asked for Armin Hofmann. A half hour later he showed up and... well, he was absolutely shocked. I asked if he remembered me and he said, "Ja ja, ja ja." I reminded him he had told me to just show up, and he was cross-eyed. I don't think he expected me to actually do so.

**EMIGRE:** Was it as simple as that? You just packed your bags and went there?

**APRIL:** Well, actually other people had applied and gone through all the official paperwork, but you know, this is typical for me, going for it intuitively.

**EMIGRE:** But didn't you need to get any visas or other permits?

**APRIL:** All you had to do at that time was go and spend some time at the police station for a day, and fill out a million forms, and let them know how much money you had and what your intention was. I remember I had to get a quick letter from the Basel school, which I ran over to the police, and that was that.

**EMIGRE:** How long did you study there?

**APRIL:** I was only in Basel for seven months.

**EMIGRE:** Do they teach bilingually, or did you pick up a lot of German?

**APRIL:** No it's all done in English. See, I was in the "weiterbildungsklassen" (further development classes). This is a special program that was set up by Hofmann, which was initially intended to be a two-year program for international students and professionals. There were usually about twenty students from all over the world. That's the class I entered. But I only was there for six or seven months.

**EMIGRE:** That was enough?

**APRIL:** Not really, but probably it was good for me to just get that amount of indoctrination.

**EMIGRE:** What was the most important thing you learned in Basel?

**APRIL:** There are two things that I learned: a basic structure and order, and realizing there are a really good base to start off with. The other thing I learned was how to allow myself a playful environment. In Basel you had all the time in the world and very little input from the instructors, there was just about no input. Physically with technique I mean, I was in his class for seven months and he didn't speak to me for the first few

**EMIGRE:** Well, he was mad at you for showing up so suddenly and putting him on the spot?

**APRIL:** No, I think he was really really liked me. I always honestly believed that that was, he didn't speak to other people either, and the funny thing was that in the beginning, it drove the American students mad. They're so used to talking a lot, it's the American education. You know, the person who asks the most questions gets the highest grade. The Americans were getting and weren't even getting really mad at Hofmann, they were spoiled little birds, mostly included. And I just sat there for five months, what I ended up doing was having to deal with myself, and what I could draw out of myself. We were given assignments that were completely open-ended. These were assignments that, once you came up with the essential idea, you would spend the rest of your life developing, coming up with endless varieties of solutions. After a while what happened was that it didn't matter anymore what the teacher said. Once you had an essential statement, you could see if it was winning or not, and it was then that you could also feel it. And that's your graduate grade, when you feel it right. You know, it's not only an intellectual process.

**EMIGRE:** It's interesting that you mention this aspect to be such an important influence from Basel. Especially because, experimentally or not, Basel is still a school that produces, for the most part, designers who do rational, clean structured design. Do you think there exists a misconception about Swiss design?

**APRIL:** No, I think that the perception of Swiss design is not extremely inaccurate for the bulk of work that comes out of Switzerland. However, some people's work is too often labeled as Swiss in a negative sense, meaning too clinical, cold or rational. For instance, I find Hofmann's work to be quite different than that. The way he likes to compose, he can find that right moment of beauty, so that to me, his work is infused with emotion. It's a very warm and not clinical at all. It has that perfect balance between order and spontaneity, a certain presence that doesn't feel like he has worked too many to death.

April Greiman  
Photography for April Greiman Inc.

I think that the real focus with young people should be to funnel their energies, ideas and skills into a really conscious kind of communication, including helping to save our environment. Not everything needs to be printed, you know. I'd like to see people get more seriously involved in environmental, global and cultural issues.

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Basel

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**EMIGRE:** *So most of your education has been very Swiss?*

**APRIL:** Yes, except I had not had any typography education in Kansas City at all. Just none. So when I went to Basel and entered the type shop, I started to faint, because I was so afraid, never having done anything with type.

**EMIGRE:** *And most of the other students in that class, since it was a post-graduate class, had already worked professionally?*

**APRIL:** Yes, that was the concept. And it was a great idea. Unfortunately you can only appreciate it after you have worked for a certain time and look back at this.

School is a Utopia. And you don't realize that when you've never worked before, because you don't have the skills to even begin to appreciate Utopia. When you go out into the world and practice design, and you're under the pressure of work, you realize the value of having time to explore things. Having open-endedness and all this "white space," is very exhilarating. I don't think I realized this when I was in Basel.

**EMIGRE:** *When were you there?*

**APRIL:** It was there between 1970 and 1971.

**EMIGRE:** *The heyday of Swiss design.*

**APRIL:** Perhaps, yes.

**EMIGRE:** *Do you think there is something inherently Swiss about Swiss design?*

**APRIL:** Yes. Out of a real obsession with order and cleanliness comes that kind of graphic design. The Swiss really take pride in things working and things running on time, like the Swiss railroad system. I've never been on a Swiss train that didn't leave and arrive exactly on time.

**EMIGRE:** *I read your Strathmore interview. In it you say that "Design should be a product and a message of the culture in which it communicates." Traditional Swiss design is a perfect example of this. It is a product of its culture, you just pointed this out yourself. On the other hand, Swiss design has been exported all over the world. You, in a sense, are an exponent of this tradition. Do you think it is appropriate, as an American designer, to borrow this vocabulary, and use elements of it in your own work?*

**APRIL:** I don't think I borrowed Swiss design elements at all. I think I utilize the structural integrity that I learned in Switzerland, which was about structure and the pursuit of high quality concerning the different disciplines within graphic design. But what I found was that Swiss design, or what is maybe a bit more appropriate term, the "International Style," can be very successful in a certain kind of climate. So in New York, where I started my career, where the climate is more corporate, it was perhaps perfect, it worked there. When I accidentally moved to Los Angeles and tried the same thing there, it didn't work, because the cultural and corporate climate is quite different, and the type of industries that we serve here are very different. We don't serve banks, gas companies, and publishers. The main industries that I've been involved in here are the high-tech, fashion, design and entertainment businesses.

**EMIGRE:** *I think your work has changed only partially, and mostly in terms of your use of imagery, your typography has remained Swiss. And what I like the most about your work, no matter what you involve yourself in, whether it's photography, video, computer, or a combination, is that it's always very experimental. You work under your need for experimentation; you're always exploring, looking for new solutions and taking a lot of risks. On the other hand, I find that your use of type and typography has generally remained unchanged and is still based on this very clean, structured Swiss approach, with very little experimentation. Why have you always involved yourself so much in image experimentation and so little in type and typography? This is my personal interpretation of your work. You might think it's totally incorrect.*

**APRIL:** But it's a pretty correct assertion. I think that certain types of aesthetics stick, and certain ones evolve. But I have to explain something. I was not brought up as a traditional Swiss typographer. Perhaps Swiss typography is total hell or badness or bad taste. I wasn't brought up like that. Instead, I've been influenced a great deal by Wolfgang Weingart. And Weingart does not do Swiss typography. When I was in Basel, in his class, there was a lot of experimentation with letter spacing, combining different typefaces, and different uses of space. However, it was still very structured. But what, after I left Basel, I think the predominant aesthetics and philosophies that influenced me were Jan and Armin. And I think I started to hold typography in a very "high place." A place that represents a high amount of order and refinement, and maybe even simplicity. It has become the counterpart to the more complex textures and structures that I employ in my work nowadays, although I don't think it has necessarily been a conscious thing.

**EMIGRE:** *Just a respect for order?*

**APRIL:** Yes. I think you can't have chaos without order. I don't want to promote everything else as far as chaos as I can, but I still want to communicate a message. I feel it isn't commensurate unless I have that nice counterweight of balance. My typography often represents the "high order" in my work.

**EMIGRE:** *Do you start your designs with the typography or imagery?*

**APRIL:** Both, it happens simultaneously and evolves simultaneously.

**EMIGRE:** *You actually work for a Swiss client at the moment, is that right?*

**APRIL:** Yes, usually enough, my one European client at this moment is in Basel, a furniture company called Vika. We just completed a brochure for them before a furniture, which takes pictures.

**EMIGRE:** *Is there any particular difference between Swiss and American clients?*

**APRIL:** Yes, although since Vika is the only Swiss client I've ever had, I would feel more comfortable comparing American clients with European clients. And there is a big difference between these two. Europeans are more sophisticated and they can handle this very sophisticated experiment going on between what is an and what is design, and that's really neat, especially for someone like me who's been conditioned visually for being too much of a fine artist and not a problem-solving designer. So it is very refreshing to deal with European clients. They don't concern themselves too much with this silly top c.

**EMIGRE:** *When do you think young designers should be most concerned with today?*

**APRIL:** This might sound very Californian. I think that the real focus with young people should be to focus their energies, don't do it with a really conscious form of commercialism, including helping to leave our environment. But everything needs to be paid, you know. I'd like to see people get more socially involved with environmental, global and cultural issues.

**EMIGRE:** *Is there an opportunity for young designers to be involved in these matters?*

**APRIL:** There is a lot to be. It is always in that one percent of the population that will save the world, while the other ninety-and-seven will run it into the ground, but unfortunately, the last few people are a little bit asleep. Lots of the things around that are published by the industry and our professionals, use a lot of slick stuff to sell printing, and a lot of similar boring work, which means the profession is becoming in style and surface rather than ideas. And that's dangerous. People should—I think realize, they should look inside.

**EMIGRE:** *Yes, but it takes a lot of guts to follow your own instincts.*

**APRIL:** Well, we're getting very ghettoized, but the

**EMIGRE: What was living in Switzerland like?**

**APRIL:** In the beginning I rather loved it because for a designer, Switzerland seemed to be the height of what civilization could offer (everything is clean and white and everything works) and if you went to the five and dime store you could find incredible kitchen items that were beautiful. There was nothing really ugly or "twentieth" that you could buy. I mean, even your toothbrush holder was a great object! There was nothing like that in America.

more you love and trust yourself, the more you believe in yourself, the easier it gets. And then, in addition, you need to be very patient.

**EMIGRE: Patient?**

**APRIL:** Patience is very important, this is something I learned from Hofmann. See, I left Basel after seven months, because I was emotionally and physically exhausted. I was going to go back to the States thinking I might eventually come back to finish school, when Armin Hofmann invited me to stay with him and his wife Dorothé, in the Italian part of Switzerland. He invited me to stay for nearly half a year, so I could finish some of my projects. And I did that. I had many wonderful experiences there, not doing my own projects so much as just watching Armin Hofmann work on his. Often, after lunch or dinner the three of us would have great talks. I remember asking things like, "Okay, after school, how long does it take before you start doing something really interesting?" And he'd say it would take at least ten years. Nothing that you could claim to be your own would come much sooner than that. And he was right.

**EMIGRE: You feel you've reached this point?**

**APRIL:** Yes. I felt in the late seventies, with *Wer* magazine, that there was something happening for me. It didn't totally coalesce, but there was a germ or a seed there and it was starting to grow and fall into place.

**EMIGRE: Did you realize it, did you experience that feeling?**

**APRIL:** Yes, and I thought, "Damn, Hofmann's right again." It made me mad, but he was usually right.

**EMIGRE: What happened next, after you realized it was all falling into place? Did everything fall into place after that?**

**APRIL:** Well, as with everything that is put together, it sooner or later also falls apart. And it did for me. That's when I started a whole new career about five years later. In seventy-seven I started doing *Wer* magazine and some exploratory things, layered, collaged things, which I did with Jayme Odgers. In eighty-one I was already completely disillusioned with this idea. So that was just a real quick blitz. Then in eighty-two I bought my first video camera and started fooling around with computers and new textures. That was again a new door that opened. And in the past two years, I've been feeling that the work we're doing is maybe reaching another peak, the result of new ideas.

**EMIGRE: And from that point on we've all been watching you closely.**

**APRIL:** (Laughing) Yes, too closely perhaps!

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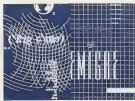
The covers shown on this page were designed by graphic design students at Yale University and Boston University as part of a day workshop given by Rudy VanderLans. Each student could choose from a variety of previous *EMIGRE* issues. The different issue themes were type, text, appropriation and connections in graphic design, British design, and the Swiss design school.



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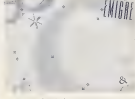
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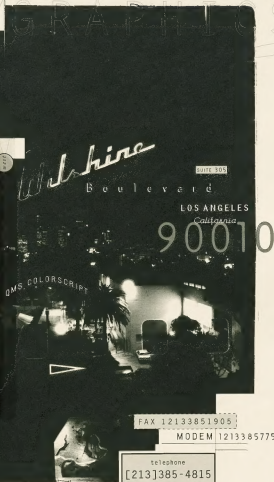
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